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TAKE IT TO BED

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by
D. B. WYNDHAM LEWIS

Selected, with a Preface, by
JAMES AGATE

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To
REGINALD HOOPER
Editor of the *Tatler-Bystander*

But for whom. . . .

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FOREWORD

BEVAN WYNDHAM LEWIS is the Onlie Begetter of this book; I am its godfather. And, in a sense, semi-begetter, because the idea that a collection should be made of my friend's brilliant contributions to the *Tatler* and *Bystander* is originally mine. "But wh-who is g-going to ch-choose the extracts?" asks Bevan, stammering. I, who stammer a little less, reply, "M-me." Then says Bevan: "Who-who's g-going to w-write the f-foreword?" I say, "M-me t-too."

Where am I to 'place' this witty creature? Who, in other words, are our master-wits? In the matter of the novel, Osbert Sitwell, Evelyn Waugh, Angela Thirkell. In the essay, Max Beerbohm. As a polemist, Shaw. As reviewers, Rebecca West and Raymond Mortimer. In the theatre, Noel Coward. On first nights, Herbert Farjeon and Alan Dent. As a virtuoso in riposte, Tommy Beecham. As a *raconteur*, Seymour Hicks. At the Savage, Duggie Furber. At the Ivy, Lilian Braithwaite, who said recently of another actress no longer in her first youth: "D'you remember that charming little face we used to like so much in *Buttercups* and *Daisies*? It's still there, but there's another little face round it!" And no one will contradict that Billy Leonard is our master buffoon.

And then of course there is the occasional wit; the man who says a good thing once in his life and thereafter holds his peace. For example, the man who said "Liberal-Nationals call themselves Liberal to save their faces and National to save their seats." The man who first applied to the artists engaged by E.N.S.A. the line about the fairies from Rutland Boughton's *The Immortal Hour*, "They laugh and are g'ad and are terrible." The man who, looking at some Royal Academician's picture showing Patience in the form of a young woman perched on a monument smiling at Grief in the shape of another young woman squatting on the ground, said: "Next year he must re-read *Hamlet* and give us his 'Look, amazement on thy mother sits'." The man who said of some preposterous piece of feminine headgear that it came out of the Nellie Wallace collection.

But all these are, so to speak, amateurs in the sense that they can be witty or refrain from wit as they like. They do not have to be witty weekly, daily, hourly, like Bevan. And, of course, 'Beachcomber'. At their best there is no separating these two. Consider 'Beachcomber's' story of passing Queen's Hall one morning, feeling a sudden urge to go in, and finding a dusky stranger seated cross-legged on the floor, murmuring: "Brahms, for the love of Allah!" Against this put Bevan's description of Mistinguet as

"A rose-red cutie half as old as Time".

Consider 'Beachcomber's' fierce "Schubert's Last Words. 'Don't let poor Tauber starve'." And compare: A man-about-town declaring that on the previous evening he had innocently gate-crashed a party where champagne ran from the bath-room taps and an orgy was in progress dimming the worst depicted in Beardsley's *Venus and Tannhäuser*. Bevan waited till he had finished and then piped: "S-sandwiches as well?"

It is possible that the 'Beachcomber' sallies may have been what

Mr. Bennet called "the result of previous study"; I can swear that Bevan's impromptus proceed "from the impulse of the moment". At a dinner-table during the Boer War somebody remarked that General Buller had retired across the Modder River without losing a man, a horse, or a gun. "Or a minute," said Whistler. I can imagine Bevan saying this, enhancing it with his delightful stutter. Indeed I think it is from Whistler's wit that Bevan's derives. In more than one selection the reader will find an allusion to the 'Island Race'. It is, I think, more than a coincidence that on the first page of my friend's essay on Whistler this sentence occurs: "Although mediocrity is still adored by the mass of the Islanders (as the foreigner Whistler always called us), its power is no longer absolute."

Bevan is known for his likes: 'Beachcomber' for his dislikes. And there is another difference between them. Bevan resembles his writings. 'Beachcomber' does not. Do we not know those nostalgic references to the rollicking pre-war days when dear Johnny Morton professes to recall pouring flagons of Rhenish down the neck of the Abbess of Mont St. Gothard? Hear now a story. I was staying at Worcester for the Malvern Festival, and after some three hours of *St. Joan* had slipped away to catch a low comedian appearing in the second half of the bill at a little music-hall opposite my hotel. To my delight and amazement, who should be in the stalls but Johnny? It was the work of a moment to discover that he was staying at my hotel and to arrange a surprise for him in the shape of a cold grouse, a cheese soufflé and a couple of bottles of most excellent Chambertin. The feast prepared, I sent the hall porter to summon Johnny, and received a message: "Mr. Morton is much obliged, but he is very tired, has had his supper and gone to bed." Asking what Mr. Morton had had for supper I was told: "A glass of milk and a rusk." I should not believe this story if anybody were to tell it me of Bevan.

Which brings me to my conclusion. I adjure you, reader, not to swallow *Take it to Bed* at a gulp, but to savour it a page at a time as you would a wine, and so get the measure of its body and bouquet. Unless, of course, you have no palate and no nose, in which case you do not deserve a bed. The reader will forgive the retention of certain references to me. I have not had the heart to take them out.

JAMES AGATE.

Balletomane

HAVING never succeeded in taking ballet seriously, still less its pop-eyed addicts, from the Lunatic Frings upwards, we deemed *The Times* critic a little over-pompous when rapping the ballet boys for murdering that noble medieval theme *Everyman* recently.

Ballet seems to have reached a state of *tête-montage* in which it thinks it can express anything on earth from *Little Bo-Peep* to the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in terms of wagging the arms, the legs, and what a refined Woman's Page Editress recently called "the hollow of the back," or what Dr. Inge once referred to in a B.B.C. talk as the *steatopygia* (there are about 50 other current Island euphemisms for this portion of the human frame, and we've got 'em all tabulated). It is not difficult to put such an illusion across the *aficionados*, but our feeling is that the ballet boys would be better employed in something else, such as plain knitting.

In any case the Chinese have them beaten. With one single flick of the fan a good Chinese actor can convey to any audience that he has just arrived by the 6.57 from Taiping, where his aunt, Distinguished Frosted Willow, who is suffering from an œdematous swelling of the right kneecap, thinks his younger brother Pong ought to have gone in for civil engineering instead of getting mixed up with that girl Moonlit Crystal Rivulet, whose father is a crook. To convey this in ballet would mean about fifty successive *fouettés*, *gargouillettes*, *sauts truffés*, and *triples-entrecôtes-soufflés aux pommes*, and even then only that portion of the audience with dilated glassy pupils and recessive chins would know what the dancer was driving at. Dear Heaven, is it worth the struggle? That's our cry—is it worth it?

Romp

DISCUSSING modern dances, a chap on the air forgot to mention one which made us laugh like a ton of old Spam tins (*un rire nutritif*) every time we saw the Race performing it.

This dance, flourishing on the eve of the war, was a naïve, uncivilised thing with a rather bumpy Fourth Form climax. This, as it happened, an authority told us, was nothing more nor less than the climax of the traditional 16th-century witches' dance, performed regularly at midnight Sabbats before the viler mysteries began—e.g., by Dr. Fian and the celebrated North Berwick coven, and many others in Europe. To see those round, innocent, beaming Nordic pans enjoying the romp so much was therefore a quaint experience, like seeing the earnest folk-dance-addicts tripping round the Maypole, all unconscious of its ancient symbolism.

The odd thing, considering some recent dance-importations from the jungle and the Voodoo Belt, is that when the Viennese waltz first came into England it was vehemently denounced by leading dowagers as

licentious. Whereas cricket—well, you know the syri bolism of cricket. Let us pass on to healthier tropics, as the little actress said laughingly to the psychiatrist.

Blot

FOR the Advisory County Cricket Committee to pass a resolution at Lord's that matches shall last either two or three days does not touch the real problem. What makes the name of first class cricket stink all the world over, as everybody knows, is the unseemly behaviour at the wicket.

The presence of women on the pitch during a match is a tradition the M.C.C. should have abolished long ago. It dates from the Regency, when every player strolled insolently to the wicket arm-in-arm with his mistress, and licentiousness was rife. The Editor of *Wisden* said in 1805:

"Lustrous eyes, snowy bosoms, ruby lips—egad, the old Pitch has seldom seen a fairer sight than was displayed to Cricket's votaries during the Middlesex-Surrey match, when the most beauteous denizens of the Beau Monde—ay, and the Demi-Monde—among whom we observed Lady J— --y, Lady C——n, the Duchess of R— ---e, and La Bella Ravioli of the Opera—hung swooning on the manly breasts of Mulch and Gowler, from whose hands the crimson sphere fell half-suspended—for at Beauty's imperious command what gallant bowler dare proceed? Damme, 'twas Cupid ruled the game!"

The average eight-ball over might take twelve hours to play in these circumstances, which seems long even to a British cricket crowd. The M.C.C., denounced by several bishops but not daring to offend the great world, took no action. There is even less excuse to-day for tolerating a pitch thronged with a rabble of actresses, B.B.C. girl announcers, Mayfair dance-hostesses, Parliamentary Glamour Girls, pseudo-Oriental snake-charmers, and Heaven knows what, chattering, laughing, flirting, ogling the players, obstructing bowlers and batsmen, and utterly defeating the ethical aims of Our National Game. Every serious cricketer will have but one word for this kind of situation: viz., lousy.

Throb

ANOTHER musicianly crack at the cinema organ has been recently taken by an organist who resents the degradation of a noble instrument.

Sed contra, as logicians say, you may remember the notable boast some time ago of the organist of Londonderry (Ulster) Cathedral? "I could play jazz all week on the cathedral organ without doing it any harm," he growled; reminding us forcibly at the time of Tennyson's lines:

Seated one day at the organ
I jumped as if I'd been shot,
For the Dean was upon me, snarling
"Stainer—and *make it hot.*"

All week I swung Stainer and Barnby,
Bach, Gounod, and Bunnett in A ;
I said, "Gosh, the old bus is a wonder !"
The Dean, with a nod, said "Okay."

A few days after the Londonderry air, happening to be in Ste. Clotilde in Paris, where the great César Franck was organist so long, we heard strange moans and shudderings from the organ-loft. Repairs to the dynamo, or something, they said. Repairs nothing, that poor distinguished organ was just dying of shame.

Risk

ROME Radio's remark the other night that the Duce has "an almost physical revulsion against having his words taken down and printed" is stirring the booksy underworld to its murkiest depths, our spies report.

Being practically one of us inky boys—you may remember his play *Napoleon*, produced in London a few years ago—the Duce's sudden coyness about being printed has already led one or two leading girls in the fiction racket to describe him as a big, blue-chinned, double-crossing sissy. Our feeling, contrariwise, is that he has been suddenly smitten with remorse for the future of printers' children.

Printers' children often rouse from sleep late at night to hear their male parent waking and being very ill indeed. "Dear Heaven," says the printer's wife in anguish, "he's been setting up another 50 pages of Dirty Gertie's tripe again !" Even the hardest members of their proud, ancient craft may suddenly succumb in this way, collapsing with an open snuff-box and a handful of 12-pt. Fournier or Caslon Old Face into the arms of the Father of the Chapel. Another thing printers get from handling booksy girls' manuscript is dermatitis, a disease of the fingers. Knowing their parent to be thus nightly exposed to danger, their children become wan, nervous, and haggard, though they don't mind (we've asked them) their father setting up a page like this, clean, decent prose devoid of sexy brawling. As if booksy girls cared about the little ones !

Encounter

RAPPING those fanatics who sit on the floor, a B.B.C. "Proms" mogul writing to the papers seemed unaware that many of the odd Bloomsbury shapes you see at Promenade concerts, and nowhere else, are compelled to squat in order to express themselves.

In the year 1926 we had a few words with one of these after treading on a strange hairy being of ape-like appearance who was not sitting on the crowded floor of Queen's Hall, but reclining at full length. He said he had to listen to Beethoven in this way in order to get the right vibrations, red, green, and orange, in the order named. A lot of other things came into it, such as Karma and the Seven-Fold Way, and it turned out that Nirvana (or annihilation) was this ape-like being's ultimate goal. That was all right with us, too. However, being trodden on apparently upset his vibrations, which became mauve and Prussian blue. The July

heat in Queen's Hall was tropical, Sir Henry's third collar was a rag, the gasping goldfish in the fountain was practically boiled alive, the orchestra looked red-hot, weird elfin and gargoyle faces loomed and peered from the crowd at us during the interval, and the ape-man lay there and scrabbled with his weak beard and talked about the Universal Oversoul. Finally a big, tough, frowning girl in tweeds fell over him and said, very justly, "There's only one way to remove things like this—*Flit*," and we left her to it and went out for a nice warm beer.

Such episodes seem to show that what the B.B.C. want to run the Proms properly are not floor-managers but entomologists.

Tossspots

QUISLING'S boys, according to a late German high official in Norway, are mostly drunk; like the Vikings, but—oddly enough—unlike our Sturdy Saxon Forbears, of whom you have read in the official or Whig history books.

Mr. Belloc's Mrs. Markham explains the Saxon position very nicely to Tommy and Mary in her famous chats on English History. She admits they drank a lot, but :

"We must remember that they were ruder than we are, for we all get better as time goes on, but they were of the same sturdy stuff that we are and had the same self-control and decency, so I am sure they never got drunk—a horrible idea, as you rightly say."

Maybe it was this decency—plus a rude form of cricket, played with skulls and thighbones—which had such an effect on those howling savages the Vikings that they instantly turned into English gentlemen, as you see from the coloured pictures. As a matter of fact the eminent Saxon poet Osbert the Well-Sitter makes rather an issue of it in a saga beginning :

Over the rolling wave,
over the gannet-bath,
over the water-throng,
abode of the whale,
fair-haired outsiders,
Harald Egg-Face,
Nils of the Bloody Snuzzle,
thousands of Vikings,
absolute cads,
all simply plastered,
landed on Angle-shores,
saw Saxon decency,
took a few eager
knocks at the nets,
shed all their coarseness,
oaths and inebriety,
kept a straight bat,
turned to a cross between
Parsifal
and Anthony Eden.

We don't know who these last Nordic heroes were.

Maya

WHETHER the newly formed body called the Friends of Hansard is causing the Island Race to queue up excitedly for copies of the current Parliamentary debates we wouldn't know. The whole thing is Maya, or illusion.

The cleanly and indefatigable Hansard's job, of turning the speeches of M.P.s into English, has long since qualified him for membership of the Magic Circle. The white magic of Mr. Jasper Maskelyne and the art of that virtuoso who saws ladies in half on the music-hall stage are almost precisely similar. Taken down verbatim, the average M.P.'s speech is the inchoate bumbling of a chimera in a vacuum. Max Beerbohm gives a perfect example of it in his essay on The House of Commons Manner :

"It seems to me that the right—the honourable member for—er—er —er (*the speaker dives to be prompted*)—yes, of course, South Clapham—er —(*temporising*) the Southern Division of Clapham—(*long pause ; his lips form the words 'Where was I ?'*)—oh, yes, the honourable gentleman the member for South Clapham" (etc., etc., etc.).

Maybe the irruption of the Parliamentary Glamour Girls has altered all this. Anyway a recent exchange reported by our Gallery spies seems to show that things are brighter :

Mrs. Owlglass (Ind., West Burping) : I have already given notice of that question.

Sir G. Anguish (Lib., Sapsleigh) : We can see that from the look in those big wonderful eyes. (Cheers.)

Mrs. Owlglass : Meaning little me ?

Sir G. Anguish : I am sure I speak on behalf of most of the fellows when I say that I could care for you in a big way. (Cheers.)

Love, Love, what a (hic) old magician you are.

Waggle

VISIONS of exquisite houris with burning, kohl-darkened eyes performing intoxicating twirls and leaps and arabesques probably dazzled sensual *Times* readers when Auntie broke it to them the other day that the native labour companies in Algeria have their own dancing-girls attached for pay and rations.

Actually, a knowledgeable chap tells us, the native Algerian dancing-girl is the dullest kind of static hip-wagglers and her performance, which goes on monotonously for hours, is about as intoxicating as what you used to see any night at the Ritz and the Berkeley. She is more or less shapeless and voluminously clothed. Her pan, which is homely, is veiled. The accompaniment is endless soft drumming, with maybe a wavering melancholy flute. So much for the maddening lure of the East. As the eminent Edwardian moneylender Mr. Sam Levy said of Rome, you can 'ave it.

The only interesting Moorish dancing is that which the Spaniards adapted after the Reconquest and naturalised, such as the *baile sevillana*,

which would give Auntie's little readers their basinful of intoxication, maybe. Not that we would wish to pander to the exotic yearnings of *Times* readers, who would be better employed in pressing simple wild-flowers for their herbarium or helping the Rector with his butterflies. Even then there's something unhealthy about that glitter in the eyes. . . .

Stoogery

B.B.C. audiences who set up that familiar mechanical roar every time a B.B.C. comedian opens his mouth are to be affiliated to the National Union of Stooges, our spies at Portland Place report, and may get a living wage.

It's about time, you'll agree. Those audiences work hard, they have to keep their eye on the cheer-leader's wand, and if one of them fails to come in on the laugh at the right moment, he or she is subjected to vile usage by the B.B.C. Gestapo, it is said. Most of them are allowed, however, to bring their knitting. Unlike the professional stooges employed in Whitehall and the City, the B.B.C. Variety stooge has no friends among the humbler *valetaille*, and even the lascars down in the boiler-room under Deck A treat him like dirt. That vacant glassy look is partly natural and partly acquired through fear of Mr. Watt. There is no active ill-treatment, owing to the tireless surveillance of Our Dumb Chums' League, and any stooge with a good loud giggle can put in overtime by supplying "background" or "effects" stuff for the Brains Trust. Most stooges with a respectable upbringing would rather starve.

The National Union of Stooges (regd., Trade Union Act, 1928) started in a small way in Fleet Street in 1927, when the fifteen principal yes-men of the *Daily Snoop* went as a deputation to their owner, a terrible mogul, greatly feared, and said: "Kick one, you kick all." The Big Shot then kicked all and the deputation withdrew.

Aside

By reviving Henri Becque's excellent play *La Parisienne* at the St. James's, the stage boys show what dumbos they were to ban the soliloquy as an art-form.

All that tiresome modern fussing with telephones and whatnots fails to better the simple old-fashioned commonsense method of letting the heroine turn aside a moment and remark audibly to herself: "Sir Nero making passes at little me again! There's something up Baby's sleeve for that pop-eyed menace, believe you me!" Moreover, it is natural and true to life. Dr. Johnson used to soliloquise frequently in a strong determined voice. The idea that anybody who likes talking to himself is ripe for the loony-bin is quite recent and inexpressibly foolish.

As we've said before, the Chinese theatre's way is perfect, and should be generally adopted. As soon as the curtain rises the first character to appear (in England, a butler) should come down to the footlights and make a statement. For example:

PARKER: My name is Parker and I am butler to Lord Rollo Sangazure. His Lordship has designs on Miss Prudence Dawne, who is staying in this house. At the moment the betting among our guests is 7 to 1 on. However, it looks to me as if a chap named Eric Trueblood is about to hit his Lordship for six. I will now get on the telephone to Sparkler's on his Lordship's behalf and order a diamond pendant with which he hopes to do the trick. (Goes to telephone.)

However woozy a first-night audience may be, and is, it couldn't help guessing that something or other was afoot.

Meeting

A RECENT remark by a chap on the air that the special correspondent Stanley, who found Livingstone in 1871, lacked charm to some extent, raises once more the age-old question: What did Livingstone really say when Stanley found him in the depths of the Bush?

We still have a strong feeling that Livingstone was quite happy and didn't want to be burst in upon by anybody, least of all by a journalist like Stanley. It would therefore follow (if you're attending closely) that some kind of harmless subterfuge might well have been employed by the venerable Doctor to choke Stanley off, rather gruffly. For example:

"Dr. Livingstone, I think?"

"My name is Elsie Granberry. Good morning."

On behalf of our soulmates the Fleet Street boys, we venture to assert that the sequel would have made a far better front-page "splash" news-story than the official one. Look:

MYSTERY BEARDED GIRL IN AMAZING AFRICAN BUSH DRAMA SENSATION.

Lone £10,000 Special Correspondent Kicked by Elsie

Granberry, Trousered Jungle Queen,

Allegation.

6000 Natives Sing "Shipmates" as Elderly Fitness Girl Uses "Socks" Stanley As Alleged Dumb-Bell.

"I'LL TELL MY MUMS ON YOU!"

—Whiskered Beauty's Alleged Cry As Baffled Discoverer Hits Home Trail.

The story would begin as usual: "In a quiet country cottage near Burpington, Berks, last night, a silver-haired old mother sat weeping. . . ." Gosh, it gives us a lump in the throat to think of it.

Trauma

AS one of *The Times* Nature boy's most dogged fans, we don't think he need have been quite so cagey the other day with a Fleet Street naturalist who wrote that "a small brown humming-bird" had been seen in Kent, instead of an insect called the "humming-bird hawk-moth." The chap may have been a borderline sex-case, used to seeing brown humming-birds.

The case of Mme. G . . . of Berlin will instantly occur to Freud students. Mme. G . . . complained of being persecuted by mauve humming-birds, also of being followed everywhere in dreams by a Herr K . . . of Tübingen, mounted on tiny wheels, who kept striking at her with a glass bicycle-pump filled with liqueur chocolates. This was an obvious case of the polymorphously perverse and maladjusted introvert with unbalanced thyroid and pituitaries, lacking group-consciousness and automotor control ; in other words, Ole Debble Sex playing it up for the psycho boys once more. It was revealed, after Mme. G . . . had told nearly all, that her maternal grandmother had once been chased by a Herr Vogel (Mr. Bird) in a mauve cravat, and that she had only seen Herr K . . . , a comparative stranger, once, when he held her head under water for some time while bathing in the Wannsee, shouting, "Thou dear Heaven, what a difference !"

Q. And he struck you ?

A. Favourably. A gentleman in every sense of the word, I thought.

Q. You dream about him often ?

A. Never.

Q. But you just said—

A. I only stuck that in to give you the old sexy angle.

Q. I see. Obsessional-neurosis now classified as anxiety-hysteria.

A. I beg your pardon ?

Q. Five hundred smackers, please. No cheques.

Anxiety-hysteria, as a matter of fact, is the old Fleet Street craft-trauma. We'll tell you more about it in confidence some time when the children are in bed.

Chum

NOTING how the Spring butterfly fans have been rallying excitedly round Auntie *Times's* Nature boy, we longed to join in with a query on behalf of our poor friend Mr. Robert Benchley, of New York and Hollywood. "Don't look round yet," mumbled Mr. Benchley to a sympathiser at a party some time ago, "but I think I've got butterflies in my stomach."

None of Auntie's little readers seems to suffer from this disability or the Nature Correspondent would surely have mentioned it. E.g. :

At King's Snoring the Rev. O. Wamble saw a male orange-tip on April 9. Mrs. Chowpe saw a green-veined white on the same date at Burphambury. Mr. Gofficks writes : "At Muckton Magna on April 6 I seemed to have my stomach full of pearl-bordered fritillaries." Miss Owl bath reports similarly at Fadginton on the same day. On April 17 Dr. Deedles noted the first blue hairstreak, etc., etc.

This would inevitably start a correspondence, beginning :

Sir,—It is hardly possible that the butterflies in Mr. Gófficks's stomach were pearl-bordered fritillaries. This species is rarely found north of the Home Counties at such an early date. My late aunt's stomach in May 1889 seemed full of red admirals, but (etc., etc.).

and ending

Sir,—Your entomological correspondents' abdominal experiences will remind admirers of Disraeli that during the Committee Stage of the Streets (Widening) Bill of 1867 he suddenly exclaimed: "Why does a chicken cross the road?" Amid a storm of Conservative cheering Sir Jas. Grumble retorted: "An army marches on its stomach!" The riposte was greatly enjoyed by Mr. Gladstone, who (etc., etc., etc.).

Meanwhile that rank prudery common to *Times* readers would leave our main query still unanswered, namely, "What *kind* of stomachs do butterflies fly round in for preference?" The answer might not reassure Mr. Benchley anyway, and might even turn out to be a nasty crack at his whole interior.

Glass

THAT poem of Maurice Baring's with the yearning refrain: "I like the sound of breaking glass" may have occurred to not a few fellow-vitreoclasts—to coin a frightful bastard of a word, in the manner of Modern Science—after the R.A.F.'s visit to the world-famous Zeiss factories at Jena ("Zeiss work if you can get it," as the little actress said laughingly when the bishop swallowed his binoculars). The noise of all that costly optical and scientific glass going up would seem to many sportsmen like Gaudy Night in Paradise.

Glass-smashing is a subtle pleasure in itself, and any added motive mars it. Thus the anti-blood-sports thinker who tossed a rock a little time ago through a new stained-glass window in a West Country church representing St. Hubert, patron of huntsmen, was a dull yahoo, whereas the ancient Russian ritual of drinking certain toasts with linked arms and then hurling your empty glass over your shoulder against the wall is gay and exhilarating; for which reason, maybe, certain crack British regiments used to drink the Queen thus, evoking no criticism from anybody, least of all the mess-contractors.

Political lamp and window-smashing contrariwise, is a joyless business, and probably not 1 per cent of the mob which stoned Apsley House a hundred years ago to annoy the Duke of Wellington got that pure thrill of which Mr. Baring sings. The mind of the true glass-smasher is unclouded by anxiety or prejudice and completely detached; which is why Oxford is the cradle of the sport.

Note that to love the sound of breaking glass does not necessarily connote vulgar, indiscriminate smashing. With that restraint and delicacy which marks his distinguished prose, Mr. Baring himself on occasion used to balance balloon-glasses on his head at dinner-parties to the admiration of all beholders, afterwards restoring them to table unhurt. A less sensitive artist would have sought a cheap popularity and the inebriation of public applause by producing a hammer from his tails.

Clash

DINING with Tolstoy one evening, Turgenev (a chap recalled the other day in a literary weekly) remarked to that aged chatterbox: "Be silent, Tolstoy, or I will throw my fork at you." A typically

Russian dinner-time situation, ending, we guess, in reciprocal tears and kisses.

Whether this was just before Tolstoy ran away from his wife at the age of 81 we can't say offhand. Quite recently a highbrow was trying to explain this flight in terms of Freud, which is absurd. In our unfortunate view it was the Urge for Romance. Slogger Tolstoy, just a big boy at heart, had probably been reading sea-stories and wanted to see the great world. Our information is that he got to Archangel and tried impetuously to sign on as cabin-boy. Asked his age by a kindly old sea-captain, he said sixteen. "In that case," said the kindly old captain, "I cannot but congratulate you, little white father, on that fine snowy beard. You must be a West End *jeune premier*." Whereupon Tolstoy burst into one of those mystico-sociological tirades and the kindly old captain said at length: "Little angry carrawayseed, little hairy sunflower, oblige me by getting the hell out of it," and the incident ended.

Throwing forks at vexing booksy boys is a sport we have never practised as yet, but once at the Café Royal we saw a dollop of cheese-soufflé dropped from the balcony with great care and excellent effect. In Paris this would have meant a duel. In London it meant a lot of ridiculous gestures and chattering from dishevelled literary girls of all three sexes. However, it stopped a falsetto lecture on Determinism in Art, which was something.

Throb

ONCE again a theatre fan has been pestering a dramatic critic (as if critics knew) to know which is Shakespeare's most dramatic single line. When we were a critic we used to fob these nuisances off with a passage of our own, ending in a superb single line, which we claimed to have got from a rare First Folio version of *The Merchant of Venice*, differing slightly from the official one. Thus:

The Rialto. Enter Antonio and Gratiano.

ANT: What news?

GRAT: Why, sir, your ships are sunk, I fear,

Your house is well on fire, your Peke is dead,

Your girl-friend's flown the coop with Dirty Dick,

Your backer's cut his throat, your horse is lame,

Your safe, with all the jewels, has been swiped,

You're hammered on the Venice Stock Exchange,

Your butler has D.T.'s, the bums are in,

Your lawyers have foreclosed, your staff has mumps,

Two libel suits, one bankruptcy, are pending,

Your hat's all over mud—in short, to coin

A phrase, you're down the drain, old boy!

ANT: Well, well,

Well, well, well, well, well, well, well, well, well, well.

Imagine what Irving could have done with that last pregnant line, but make no comment, and do not shuffle those huge feet.

Kermesse

POSSIBLY because it is one of the dullest murders known to man and stinks of mediocrity in every key, the Red Barn case (1827) continues to thrill *Times* readers, who have been writing excitedly to Auntie to establish how Maria Martin spelt her surname, a vital point.

More interesting than Mr. Corder's uninspired disposal of Miss Martin, after doing her in, under the Red Barn floor is the way the jolly Suffolk locals enjoyed every minute of the subsequent proceedings. Polstead Cherry Fair coincided with the inquest, at which the coroner could hardly make himself heard for the rollicking. A non-stop puppet-show featured Mr. Corder liquidating Miss Martin, a dissenting pastor denounced Mr. Corder in a loud sermon on the scene of the crime, and the Red Barn was nearly carried away for souvenirs. The ensuing trial and public hanging of Mr. Corder, though even duller than the murder itself, wound up a kermesse the like of which Suffolk had not seen since Joe Guffin ate his grandmother.

Films and the B.B.C. have debauched rustic taste to such an extent that when there was a juicy murder near Eastbourne a few years ago the enormous crowds visiting the fatal bungalow showed no joie-de-vivre at all, and even the children and the traffic-cops forbore to dance. However, the wayside catering arrangements (hot dogs, lemonade, ices) were excellent, they say.

Event

WHAT the Austerity Ascot of 1943 means was summed up for us last week by an elderly racing chap in four words: "No damn silly hats."

He meant the women, we gathered, for he went on to tell us about a man-about-town who was detected in 1904 slinking through Bond Street in a sort of Homburg hat three days before Ascot Week ended, and was very properly handed a revolver by his friends, locked in a room, and told to behave like an English gentleman. The funeral was private. Those were the days when Bond Street was full of flowers and sunshine and shining lissom ethereal beings and swept by delicious zephyrs from a thousand perfumers, mingled with the incense of Oriental gold-tipped cigarettes; but even then racing chaps took a dim view of women for letting the big modistes build them such ridiculous hats. The famous Ascot cloudburst of the 1920's showed that Dame Nature herself had had a basinful, this chap said.

Our feeling is that maybe the leading modistes of Mayfair looked forward to creating Ascot hats as the big laugh of the year. Fifinette would cry across the street huskily to Chez Zouzou, "Hoy, Abie, lookit, my new chapeau by me I got it good, ach du lieber Gott, I ask you, Abie, earholes!" and Chez Zouzou would hitch up his baggy striped pants and wave his hands and dance on the pavement, crying, "Ach, Heinie, I should worry, by me my model is something astronomich yet, what it is so schön so a leetle dawg is chewing it right now, only fifty smackers, herein is good business by me so what?" Then Ciboulette looks out from a few

doors down, grinning all over his big bristly face, and Kiki over the way laughs till his braces split.

Purge

RENEWED vague chitterings about "reforming" the German national character after the war make us laugh like a herd of cows. The aunties who think that in one generation, or two, anyone can eradicate the influence of a dozen or so centuries of bullying and submission from cradle to grave are worthy ornaments of Cloud-Cuckoo Land, unless we err.

Something might be done in the nursery, nevertheless, about those German fairy tales, which are so full of chopping and stabbing and gouging and roasting, cannibalism and witchcraft and sadism (*cf. Hansel and Gretel*) and all the cruel kobolds and gnomes and warlocks of the German forests. If the infant Boche were given a basinful of Hans Andersen and Madame d'Aulnoy instead it might benefit him considerably. It is impossible to resist the gentle charm of Hans Andersen (it often conceals some pretty satire), and we were delighted a little time ago to find a brisk old lady in Denmark who knew Andersen describing him as bone-idle, egotistic, erratic, jealous, quarrelsome, tearful, and generally impossible.

Like Racine and Dickens and La Fontaine and Byron and most of the world's ace charmers, Mr. Andersen was apparently hell to live with. It's a kind of natural law, the only exception being Slogger Carlyle, just a big boy at heart, as Dorothy Parker observed pensively :

Carlyle combined the Lit'ry Life
With throwing teacups at his wife,
Remarking, rather testily,
"Oh, stop your dodging, Mrs. C !"

That's what tries a sunny playful nature—girls who duck.

Claustrophobic

PROPOS such matters, we learn that histrioclaustrophobia, the fear of being trapped in an enclosed space with a lot of wild actors, is not among the diseases for which the Medical Research Council boys will soon be testing the populace by "taking a drop or two from the ear-lobe."

It is estimated that only about 3.5 per cent of the theatre-going public now suffer from histrioclaustrophobia. Harley Street classes sufferers with what the eminent Charcot called the *grands hystériques*, but this is ridiculous. They are normal in every way except that halfway through the tense situation in Act I, where Rollo St. Cyr declares his love, they begin suddenly choking and/or bleeding at the nose and begin to panic. From a specialist's case-book we extract the following questionnaire for such cases :

'1. Is your feeling of panic confined to the theatre, or to any enclosed space containing actors ?

2. Does the presence of winsome little actresses increase or diminish your feeling of terror and doom ?

3. Do you simultaneously have a feeling that your back is covered with egrets' feathers, eidelweiss, or bicycle-bells ?

4. Was your maternal grandmother ever locked in a box, or chest, by accident, with Sir Henry Irving ?

If the answer to the key-question, No. 4, is "Yes," the psychiatrist will tell you at once what the trouble is ; as he will, for that matter, if the answer is "No." As for the cure, no true histrioclaustrophobic has ever been cured. It may seem all right at one moment, and next moment there you are, bounding for the emergency exit like a galvanised chamois, eyes wildly dilated, teeth bared, handkerchief to nose, and in your heart a miserable feeling that the management doesn't like it.

Rebuke

WHEN Auntie *Times*, primly looking down her aquiline beak, observed recently that the typical "amorous" engraving found in a French château seems "duller" to the average British mind than the typical sporting print found in an English country house, the old trot was sedulously ignoring the Facts of Life, as she so often does.

Place a given stockbroker—we've seen it done—in a room containing on one wall *La Toilette de la Marquise*, *Les Dangers du Tête-à-Tête*, and one or two more perfectly seemly engravings after Baudoin and the younger Moreau, and on another wall one or two Alken prints showing sporting red-faced chaps in toppers tripping head over heels into bogs or getting a charge of duck-shot in the pants, and you'll soon discover which seems the duller to him. A brief but hearty laugh at the killing humours of the Alkens, and that boy is over at the other wall for keeps, goggling his eyes out. We don't defend him, we merely state. Personally we're all for Healthy British Sport and we'd rather see a chap shot in the behind than a marquise kissed any day. This is because the influence of Cricket on our formative years has not lasted, and we were able to get it out of our sytem years ago. It's the repressed cricket-dopes who go crazy over "amorous" French engravings. No wonder Auntie (the old frosty-face) tries to pretend they'd rather look at foxhunters falling off horses and golfers fozzling their drive. She's secretly ashamed of the Fourth Form and so are we, by Gad.

Check

A SERIOUS citizen having written to *The Times* saying "gallons of ink" could be saved by omitting the "Messrs." on business envelopes, another serious citizen wrote next day proving by algebra that to save one single gallon of ink the word "Messrs." would have to be omitted 8,987,765,463 times, or some such astronomic figure. Which shows that before startling Auntie with such things citizens should think twice.

Reassured about this false economy, we shall stick to the old-world courtesies we commonly use in business correspondence, ending (for

example) every letter to the Inland Revenue with the graceful old Spanish formula "Q.B.S.M."—"who kisses your hands" (*que besa sus manos*). This formula goes over big with the income-tax boys and softens them notably. It was used to good effect, also, by a rather eminent chap we know who many years ago had trouble with a notorious piratical publisher in New York and wrote him precisely the same letter three times, ending :

"... and therefore, since you appear to be nothing more than a common thief, I propose taking the *Aquintania* from Southampton on the 18th of April next, and calling on you on or about the 25th, at 11 a.m., with a thick rattan cane, with which I shall beat you till you are numb and dazed.

Yours very sincerely,

— — — — — Q.B.S.M.

This brought, after the third repetition, profuse apologies and reparation, which shows that the old Castilian politeness is never lost, even on publishers.

Thriller

GROUSING about the way some of the current crime-fiction boys are now padding out their stuff to absurd lengths with fluff and poodle-pie, a critic claims this is a sign they are becoming written out, or in other words palsied.

This may be so, for no good crime story needs a lot of padding and whimsy-whamsy. One of the best and shortest we know is an old Spanish one. Two poor scholars tramping one day from Xaen to Salamanca stopped in the fiery noonday heat to drink at a wayside fountain, under which they discovered a stone slab faintly inscribed : *Aquí está encerrada el alma del licenciado Gil Perez*—"Here lies buried the soul of the licentiate Gil Perez." With a cynical shrug one of the scholars drank and continued his journey. As the other, scenting some mystery, was staring at the slab, a cheery voice behind him said : "I'd take a jolly good stab at it if I were you, old fruit. Buried gold jolly well indicated, what ?"

"Wimsey ?" asked the scholar, shuddering.

"Bull's-eye, old boy."

The poor scholar at once sprang at Wimsey and after a short, sharp struggle strangled him, after which all the bells of Spain, Italy, England, Ireland, Europe, France and Navarre rang merrily for 15 days on end and the poor scholar was given £10,000 and made Master of Balliol.

If that was a crime, this is what we call an ideal non-padded crime story.

Fiasco

FASCINATED by the famous Mohun-Bracegirdle abduction case, to which we lightly alluded the other week, a naval reader begs for more details, saying that his wardroom execrates vice and adores virtue, and especially the virtue of sweet little West End leading ladies.

Well, three things foiled wicked young Lord Mohun and his rakehell young friend Captain Richard Hill that December night of 1691 near

Drury Lane stage-door : (1) his Lordship and the Captain were excessively drunk ; (2) Mrs. Bracegirdle's Mamma, who clung to her daughter's waist when Mohun's armed thugs tried to hustle her into the waiting coach, was excessively tough ; and (3) the ravishing Mrs. Bracegirdle's yells were excessively loud, so that the watch came up to the rescue. The real business of the evening came later, when Mohun and Hill, having mumbly apologised and followed Mrs. Bracegirdle and her escort home to apologise further, had the door slammed in their faces. It then occurred to Captain Hill, who was greatly vexed, that the actor William Mountford was the hound who was thwarting him of Mrs. Bracegirdle's favours, so an hour later Hill and Mohun caught Mountford in Howard Street, Strand, on his way home, and Hill ran him through the body, *paf*. The Captain then fled, leaving Mohun to stand his trial for murder. He was acquitted by a majority of 69 fellow-peers to 14.

But our little naval readers will note with gratification that wickedness meets its reward. Eight years later Mohun (a byword for depravity) was involved in another murder-charge in a mixed duel and again acquitted. Thirteen years after that, in 1712, the Duke of Hamilton managed to run him fatally through the stomach in a duel in Hyde Park just before dying himself, age 37. It is better to be good, like the present Cabinet. A tough mother used to all-in wrestling is also useful, maybe.

Doom

CHARMED by that little song we sang to you the other week about the British stationmaster and his long-lost love, a reader commends us (for a change) for not delving into the more sombre post-marital aspects of stationmasters' love, as set forth in the famous French Army song about the Chef de Gare.

As you may know, the essence of this song, which begins "*Il est cocu, le Chef de Gare,*" and has a sardonic refrain of "*Ohé ! Ohé !*", has been put very delicately into an English ballade by Hugh Mackintosh, with the refrain :

Prince, can you hear the soldiery
Singing of that obscure disaster—
(Zenith of Gallic pleasantry !)
"He has been duped—the Station-Master " ?

Some time in the 1930's the *Fraternelle des Chefs de Gare Français*, or whatever the stationmasters' union is called, at length rebelled against having their marital infelicity sung to them by citizens poking their heads out of railway carriages on every public holiday, and a couple of these merry ones were hauled up before the beak at Asnières, outside Paris, and fined. For behind all that gold-braided pomp stationmasters are sensitive, and suffer like other human beings in this vale of tears.

You will say that only French stationmasters are cuckolded anyway. Our information is that if their British colleagues suffer this fate (common to so many great men in history, from Cæsar to Victor Hugo and maybe further) it is of a more respectable nature. As Professor Frederick Green of Toronto, *Officier d'Académie* and wit, said of the novels of Octave

Feuillet : "The adulteries in them are so imperceptible as to be almost English."

Offering

WITHOUT prejudice (as the lawyers say when they hand you a stinker) to the fighting and other qualities of our admirable Chinese allies, we doubt whether the West End theatre public has had a long enough rest from its last Chinese play to stand up to another just yet, as recently suggested ; charming as the last one certainly was.

We're thinking especially of that traditional comic incident of the General clambering elaborately on an imaginary horse, which to us was as full of enjoyable zing as it was 30 centuries ago. Judging by the glassy bemused look in those round blue eyes, however, a lot of the audience took this joke hard and are maybe still arguing about it ("yes, but Auntie *darling*, it *wasn't* a *real* horse !"). So we don't know how they'd get on with such a play, for example, as *Ho Hum's Farewell to Old Auspicious Fish*, by Fah Too Long (8978 B.C.), in which the wicked military man Hi Flung Pan comes on at curtain-rise and explains in the excellent Chinese manner (would to Heaven Western playwrights would adopt it !) what his line of country is :

Hi Flung Pan : My name is Hi Flung Pan and I am generalissimo of the forces of Whoo Pee. My intention is to abduct the beautiful and virtuous Ping Pong and to treat her aged parents with abominable cruelty. Meanwhile, having mounted my imaginary horse, I will dismount with exquisite subtlety and proceed to eat that hypothetical animal with odious zest.

This un-English procedure is interrupted by an official of Our Imaginary Dumb Chums' League, Peking, who scratches his left ear four times with his fan, meaning (a) "Oh ! Oh ! Strange business !", (b) "I am riding in an imaginary second-hand palanquin and the forward-off-pole coolie is cross-eyed," (c) "I cannot wholly approve of your eating your imaginary horse, which once bit the trousers off the non-existent aunt of the crystal-button mandarin Ho Go Hon," and (d) "If this arch imbroglio doesn't tie up the saps in front sufficiently, what about getting down and kicking them in the nose ?" The General then chases him offstage with an imaginary flywhisk, the play proceeds ; and we'd like to see the dumb anguish of the average West End audience trying to digest this basinful of old-time Oriental whimsy.

Riposte

MADAME CHIANG KAI-SHEK certainly put a fast one over the big bonnets when she declared, in that recent speech at her old school, Wellesley Ladies' College, Mass., that "Indehiscence and mawkish maunder will not equip us for life." Can't you see them all on the platform, the Principal and the Vice-Principal and the Bursar, all squinting down their noses, hot all over, pretending they all knew what "indehiscence" means ?

Fear of having words like this suddenly shot at them causes many dons to go bow-legged. Yet if they but had the nerve, there is an easy way (as a master of that art showed them long ago) of tackling the enemy and routing him with words twice as battering. E.g., a don says to you sneeringly: "Your view seems to me otiose." You proceed:

"Really? You don't seem to understand a purely monoplasmic attitude."

"A what?"

"In fact now I look at you, you seem to be a peculiarly decidulous example of re-entrant intellarchy, or shall I say sheer hyperdulism, in Glümpe's sense."

"Who?"

"Or Danckwerts'. Good God!"

This must be rattled off at a great pace, with an insolent air. You then turn your back on those dumbos and leave the room, still not knowing what "indehiscence" means, incidentally, which is precisely our own position at this very moment.

Ballad

YET another local Food Committee has denounced a housewife's demand to change her retailer as "frivolous," which reminds us that a little time ago we composed a sentimental ballad on this topic, which we will sing to you here and now:

I.

Amid the splendour of a West End mansion,

A woman bowed her head in grief and shame,

As well-dressed guests kept rushing from the ballroom,

And casting this aspersion on her name:

Refrain (angrily and with contempt)

She's a girl that won't stick to her grocer,

Just a butterfly wanton and vain,

Borne in on the breeze,

She'll flit round the cheese,

Then she's off to some new love again;

She's the type that true grocers despises,

Though she dresses in jewels so rare,

She's the bone in the ham,

She's the pip in the jam,

She's the Reason Retailers Don't Care.

The other statutory two verses turned out to be rather bitter, morbid and Rimbaudesque, and the Food Ministry begged us not to publish them. "A healthy open-air type of poetry is preferred by Lord Woolton," said a tiny little official with tinted glasses and a nervous cough.

Move

A MUSIC critic discussing the remodelling of orchestras reminded us of Stokowski's famous reforms a little time ago. He moved the strings of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra to the back and the brass and percussion to the front. Few people knew the real lowdown on this.

Our information is that Stokowski did it to keep an eye on certain people who often have far too little to do.

During long passages for strings and woodwind alone the percussion boys, as every music-lover knows, often deem themselves safe from observation high up at the back and free to carry on as they please. They have been known to dandle women on their knees and to roll poker-dice on the timpani for drinks. Richter once caught the first bird-call and the cymbals at Queen's Hall erecting a makeshift swing and swinging little giggling actresses to and fro, creating such disorder that half Cocqigrue's Fantasia in Ut Bémol for Strings was quite inaudible and Richter was highly vexed.

There is less of this annoying behaviour nowadays since Trainer Boulton broke the proud turbulent spirit of the B.B.C. symphony boys—not, as is often asserted, by using whips, pistols, and hot irons, but solely by the dominating power of the human eye. They never dare let out a peep now, and even the oboes very rarely make signals to women in the audience.

Romance

A CITIZEN who complained recently to a magistrate that his wife had run off with a gipsy was well in the fragrant old folklore tradition, though he didn't seem to appreciate it. Home girls have been apt to do this at intervals ever since "the Faas, coming down from the gates of Galloway, did so bewitch my Lady Cassilis that she forgot husband and kin, and followed the tinkler's piping."

Running off with a member of I Zingari, we find on inquiry in cricket circles, does not fulfil these decorative conditions, those boys not being true gipsies *de la vieille roche*, despite the fact that at the wicket they wear their little caps $\frac{1}{4}$ th of an inch askew to show their careless Romany blood. Hence the old folksong would have to be altered slightly to embrace their particular case, e.g.:

There were three gipsies came to my door,

Their bats were straight as billy, O,

And as we had not been previously introduced by a third party out of the

Red Book they couldn't say a single word, of course, neither could I,
So we all looked pretty damned silly, O.

Excuse this dollop of pure romance. You thought we hadn't such a thing in us, didn't you? Thought our only rhyme for "moon" was "baboon," huh? You just don't know us, sweethearts.

Question

MUMBLING about the "perpetual enigma" of Shakespeare's Sonnets, a recent highbrow should have had his dumb head placed firmly by some well-wisher in a haybag, in our impartial view. There is now no enigma about the Sonnets whatsoever. Lord Alfred Douglas said the last word about them a little time ago.

The Sonnets were written to and for two people—the young actor

William Hughes, "Mr. W.H.", for whom Shakespeare had a blameless and admiring affection, like David's for Jonathan, and the Dark Lady, whom Mr. Somerset Maugham would describe in a five-letter word. The Dark Lady, with whom Shakespeare was amorously entangled, to his regret, made extensive passes at Mr. Hughes. Hence the imbroglio—clear enough when the Sonnets are placed in their proper order—and hence their immortal beauty, wrung from Shakespeare's pain and conflict. Modern poets made to suffer by women probably gain relief by pinching or striking them, for pain does not seem to inspire their mousy muse to any notable extent. A major poet of course can get relief both ways, like Baudelaire when he socked his negroid love with the candlestick some time after comparing her so superbly to a ship in full sail, a sphinx, and a dancing serpent.

The real enigma about Shakespeare's Sonnets is the question where highbrows who still think the Sonnets are an enigma retire after emitting that opinion. Do they burrow madly back into the mattress or simply pop down the old crack in the floor again?

Art

TATTOOING, a daily paper reports, is booming, despite the cagey attitude of the R.A. boys towards their sister art. One of the Academicians of the tattooing world with a studio near Waterloo Station is apparently often at work till midnight on the skins of Service men and women.

Like the chap in the O. Henry story who possessed all his Puritan forefathers' stern and rugged fear of the police, we feel the indelible character of tattooing has, perhaps, certain drawbacks. Moreover this art suffers (like the R.A.) from the old academic virus. We did once view a maritime chest with a subtle device on it of a glum human face which, when its owner squeezed his skin, broke into a pleasing smile, and once at a French country fair we saw an entire torso which some Rubens of the profession had covered with coveys of well-nourished nudes in glowing technicolour, a major feat. ("Any distinguishing marks?" you can hear an official voice rasping.) But such imaginative outbreaks are rare, we gather.

Obviously tattooing promotes virtue. A citizen with a gaily decorated skin will pause and think twice before committing some deed of violence or shame. It might also, if extended by law to the Island Pan, in the manner of those aborigines who tattoo their dials with whorls and arabesques and runic devices in red and blue, lure and ravish the post-war foreign tourist even more than the Catering Bill foresees. At any rate it might take the foreigner's mind off our licensing laws, poor devil.

Geisha

A "DRY" Japan, now imminent, means, we take it, that Hon. Miss Moonlit Stewed Prune will temporarily cease her labours in the cause of true politeness and hon. savoir-faire,

Part of the duty of Hon. Miss Moonlit Stewed Prune and her sister-geishas, a traveller assures us, is to kneel opposite guests in smart Tokyo establishments as they sip their bowls of saké (which looks like Manzanilla and tastes like petrol) and sway with refined, graceful laughter every time the gentleman opposite makes a joke. This appreciation, so unaccustomed to so many, is part of a geisha's traditional training, and the West might copy it. To see stockbrokers lunching at the Savoy, each with an exquisite little actress kneeling before him, suffused with sincere mirth at each merry crack, would be indeed a spectacle.

When saké is totally banned there will be very few jokes, we imagine, from patrons of the smart *ichayas*, and few gifts of jade ornaments, accordingly, from the wives of the patrons to the geishas who entertain them, another polite old Nippon custom, apparently. Also fewer recitals of those charming little Japanese poems on rice-paper enwrapping the toothpicks, such as :

To a woman who loves a samurai
A spray of cherryblossom
Is sweeter
Than a shower of old boiled rice
Falling on the Sunday hat
Of a bowlegged geisha.

We'd let the poetry ride, personally, if we could hire somebody to laugh at all our jokes. A trifle more hon. rapture next time, Hon. Miss Frosted Papier-Mâché Ashcan, or you're fired.

Trousers

THE Board of Trade male Gestapo are apparently swooping simultaneously on tailors who yield to the cries of dressy members of the Island Race to make them turned-up trousers; a fancy which is now illegal and was pansy to begin with.

For ninety-odd years the Victorians were manly enough to turn their massive trousers up themselves before plodding through their filthy streets, letting down the reef again on reaching home, or some terrible conversation. If too proud to turn up the ends of their pants themselves, they ordered a flunkey named John or Thomas to do it. They'd no more have gone around with permanently turned-up trousers than they'd have listened to Mr. Gladstone with their shirts hanging out. Then came the *fin de siècle* of the 1890's and the *Yellow Book*, and a fearful languor overspread men about town, causing them to implore their tailors in King Edward's reign to turn their lounge-suit trousers up once for all (for they dared not suggest that the sacred striped pants of the Mayfair morning uniform be degraded in the same fashion). Cleaner pavements and roads have long since made the wearers of the permanent turn-up look supremely ridiculous, not that the Race doesn't look pretty odd in any kind of trousers, or in none.

Only one degree less ludicrous than modern legwear are attempts as "reforming" it, which Wilde first attempted with his knee-breeches. As we've so often argued, you need to start beautifying at the top. Masks of exquisite fantasy for the entire Race are our simple solution. Once

the Strand looked like a large-scale production of *l'Après-Midi d'un Faune*, trousers would decline and die of their own account. What to do with those gnarled and knobbly knees could then be decided at leisure.

Flop

DOWN our way that evergreen rustic joke the annual cuckoo débâcle has begun already, Ernie Potts having on three separate occasions imitated the Harbinger of Spring in a lonely copse, in the hope of fooling Major Harkaway of Verbena Cottage and causing him to write excitedly to *The Times*. So far the attempt has been unsuccessful, the Major having gone sour on the cuckoo racket.

It was in April 1939 that the Major, having written in vain to *The Times* for nine successive springs announcing the cuckoo weeks in advance of all the other entrants, fired his final desperate shot :

Sir.—To-day I again heard the cuckoo in this district for the first time. Is this a record ? If not, will you oblige me by cutting yourself a nice slice of jugular vein ? I have the honour to be, &c.,

E. RAMJAR HARKAWAY,

Major (ret.).

In Printing House Square they have a black list of premature cuckoo-addicts. Among these is an aged clergyman who used to add a mild postscript : "I may say that I can vouch for the verisimilitude of this asseveration, being myself the cuckoo which inspired Delius." This seemed at length to *The Times* boys specious and verging on sciolism, especially as this correspondent sometimes claimed to be Bonnie Mary of Argyle, enclosing a whiskery snapshot.

Victims

THOSE twelve Board of Trade women who are touring the country (dear Heaven !) to find out "how many larger-than-average women are likely to need new clothes" will find more work in the North than the South, if our lifelong theory (for which the Royal Society thanked us) is correct.

Our theory, once more, is that girls are larger in the North because they have to sit around all their lives listening to the men of the North telling them in hard flat voices how everything should be done. The poor sweets never get any exercise, and are generally kept in purdah. You see pathetic big dark eyes glancing down from behind the grille in a big Northern city and you hear a frightful brassy voice in the background saying "Ay, oop theer Ah tell thee they know nowt," meaning London. Then there is a blow and a cry, and the eyes disappear.

Pierre Loti took the plot of *Les Désenchantées* from Manchester, not Constantinople, as is generally believed. His three little "Turkish" girl-friends were actually named Miss Sidebotham, Miss Rowbotham, and Miss Shufflebotham. In later life they grew very lethargic, stout and despondent and married a Mr. J. Obed Smith of the cotton industry, but the handsome Frenchman was never forgotten. "That chap Li Hung

Chang, he knows nowt," Mr. J. Obed Smith would say, laying down his *Guardian* preparatory to enunciating a few simple rules for governing China. His poor stout little wives would weep silently into their weak coffee, dreaming of Loti and remembering how they all used to cry together, thinking of liberty.

In the South women are slimmer and more agile, especially in the rural districts, where they are used for carrying and holding things, also for grinding sugarcane and driving in harness. They get a hell of a time, but they don't have to listen all their lives to the way things should be run. Kemal Ataturk was just about to free the women of the North of England, they say, when he got interested in horses instead.

Entente

REVIEWING what is being done by British lovers of France to cheer the Fighting French forces in our midst, a chap forgot to mention incidentally a piece of work for the Entente very early in the war, when somebody translated a history of Harwich for distribution to the officers and crews of visiting French destroyers.

The moral effect of this little gift, apart from its intrinsic interest, was obviously such that we found ourselves at the time overhearing imaginary bits of appreciation exchanged by our Ally's sailors. E.g.:

"Tu pleures, coco?" (Thou weepest, old boy?)

"C'est ce sacré petit machin d'Harwich qui me fait pleurer ma vie fichue." ("It's this exquisite little history of Harwich, on reading which I mourn my wasted life.")

"Oh, là, là!" (Oh, là, là!)

Most probably those sailors took those little books home and read them to girls in Brest and Toulon.

Many of these girls are now married, with children knowing all about the history of Harwich.

Think what that is going to mean for the future of civilisation and do not shuffle with your feet.

Call

A NEWS-STORY of a whale being washed up recently on the Yorkshire coast, or thereabouts, reminded us for some reason of that school of sharks reported to be basking off the south coast of Cornwall a little time ago.

The tough boys and girls of Newlyn's art colony were not in the least perturbed, assuming the squamous visitants to be a school of Mayfair dealers taking a peek round. With these monsters of the deep they are familiar, having had many a hand-to-hand grapple with the same. One of them once told us that before an art dealer seizes his prey he rolls slowly belly-upwards, exposing a large area of yellowish (or if at night, starched white) stomach. The agile children of the Muses then either rip him up quickly or duck sideways and down, leaving the great jaws clashing in a useless frenzy.

At the Chelsea Arts Club you sometimes hear old shellbacks telling

each other vaingloriously how they got the better of Izzy the Rap or Razor Charley, terror of the studios, in their fighting youth. But as the poet has said

When the tide rises and sharks are around
Their voice has a timid and tremulous sound.

Much the same happens in the booksy underworld, where a well-known octopus, Joe Schmaltz of the Swiftsure Literary Agency, recently got eight tentacles round Opal Yearne and had that baby helpless and signing on the dotted line before she could let out a single peep. But seasoned booksy girls generally eat 'em first.

Brew

BUT for the impinging of the war on Arthur Machen's 80th birthday, that distinguished strewer of pearls before the public should have been compelled to reveal to the world at last the secret of Dog and Duck punch, which made the stars reel so often round his guests on summer evenings in St. John's Wood some years ago.

A golden, harmless, seductive, suave, crystalline compound, drunk in beakers, this punch crept up quietly and sandbagged you from behind, without warning. One evening in Machen's garden we heard an eminent American critic suddenly grind his teeth and cry with a sob, "*She was a tigress but my God I tamed her!*" A person of high probity, he had been discussing New England philosophy, and the Dog and Duck punch had got him. It took its name from the subtle and maddening game of Dog and Duck, known only to Machen and his friends and played with a rubber ball round his garden walks. The game looked quite simple, like the punch. The combination of both, with the hospitable presence of Machen hovering over all, urbane, silver-haired, ironic, like a French abbé of the Grand Siècle, was curiously suggestive of the witchcraft-cult which flourished at Versailles at that period. The secret formula pronounced while brewing the punch would probably be familiar to those who know the Code of Hammurabi. It was noted that its victims invariably came back next week for more.

In a long life devoted to the service of thankless Apollo we guess only one thing has ever really astonished Arthur Machen. Having during a flight of fancy invented what turned out to be the Angels of Mons in one of those pieces of exquisite prose of his, he woke up to find the Army actually swearing to them as a fact. This was less mystic and wonderful, we've always thought, than the way the Old Army afterwards galloped into the plummiest Staff jobs there were. They needed no angelic assistance for that, ho, ho.

Plan

DEVOURED by obscene curiosity, a reader asks which busy group of world-planning boys and girls, from Common Wealth up to Mrs. Ribstone's Reconstruction Rovers, we are personally backing.

Well, our feeling is that none of these simple-minded thinkers, un-

hampered by any knowledge of Europe and simplifying everything so ingenuously, is within streets of a certain dark horse we know of—if "horse" is not an ungraceful word to describe a dear little winsome thing with big violet eyes who will presently knock the world-planning racket for a row of papier-maché Japanese ash-cans. The preliminary campaign, her backers tell us, is already planned, and in a few weeks the following notice will appear in the leading dailies :

"LET JOY DIVINE plan the New Age for you ! A World-Future ABSOLUTELY TOO THRILLING FOR WORDS has been personally planned by EXQUISITE LITTLE ACTRESS (vide Press) with Personal Experience of THE LIFE BEAUTIFUL ! N**I C*w*rd writes : 'Darling, your New World is simply too terribly, deliriously wonderful !' Write (enclose P.O. 5s.) : MISS JOY DIVINE, Ye Hidey-Hutte, Burpington-on-Thames. (No Agents.)"

We can't divulge more at the moment, but there's hard money behind this baby, and Monkey Joe and Solly Fischbaum are fixing the Press. Wait till you see the first full-page photographs of little Miss Divine with her Aberdeen, Oogie-Poogie ! Attacutie !

Sob

ASKING himself in an arch sighing, mousey sort of way if we shall ever see any more Ascots-as-they-used-to-be, a gossip forgot that some of the hats and frocks smart women used to wear in the Enclosure drove many thoughtful citizens annually nuts. We composed a ballad on this topic which we don't mind singing to you, unasked, here and now :

I.

Amid the brilliant throng at Royal Ascot
A well-dressed baronet seemed ill at ease,
And as a laughing duke ran gaily past him,
He clutched his arm and said : "One moment, please !"

Refrain (slowly and with filial anger) :

Don't toss my Mamma no more sugar,
Don't stroke her insouciant nose,
It's that damned awful hat
Makes people do that,
And they're not to be blamed, I suppose ;
I told her those earholes looked frightful,
But her milliner bellowed : "Très chic !" *I don't want to knock*
Off your finely-shaped block,
But—beware of a loving son's pique !

II.

The luncheon-tent was full of happy faces,
The champagne wine was flowing free and gay,
When a young man leaped smartly on the table,
And holding up his hand he shouted : "Say !"

Refrain (more angrily) :

Don't stick no more forks in my Lovely,
 Lay off with that pepper and salt,
 To the casual eye
 She's a big Strasbourg pie,
 But it's time that we now called a halt ;
 Her frock drives me equally crazy,
 In that hat she's the Queen of the Saps,
 But since nobody can
 See one-fifth of her pan,
 You'll admit it's a blessing, perhaps.

The third and final verse was so beautiful, so touched with bitter yet transcendental pathos, that we've completely forgotten it.

Coincidence

IF we were one of the boys who are so hot at spotting omens, we'd be making an issue of the fact that Wilde's *Salome* has recently been a big hit at the State Theatre in Berlin. It was so in the last war, equally. This signifies nothing more, no doubt, than that the Germans are fond by nature of this slab of highly stage-jewelled perversity and sadism.

Taking a nervous peek at the current London stage, one perceives slightly less nitwitty flourishing than in World War I, and no sadism to speak of, a brief revival of *The Man With Red Hair* having passed quietly down the drain some little time ago. Where the omen-boys would go wrong here, probably, is to assume that the current West End stage also mirrors a public need, whereas it merely mirrors the determination of Joe Gultz and Izzy Hopwaltz and other hardfaced boys to make a bit of dough while the going's good. In Berlin, contrariwise, they devour *Salome* like salami, eagerly, in huge guzzling mouthfuls, with or without the beastly music of Strauss.

So we won't dwell on the fact that reviving *Salome* in Berlin in both wars looks like an omen of not-distant victory, for it may be merely a coincidence. And now what about our telling your fortunes instead, in our wild old gipsy way? You've got lucky faces, gorgeous gentlemen, we can see that. Not handsome, just lucky. There's a fair la— excuse our overpowering Romany giggles. Just the wind on the heath, lucky gentlemen.

Butterflies

JANE AVRIL of the Moulin Rouge, from whom Toulouse-Lautrec made his first poster and many other studies, has just died in a home for the aged in a Paris suburb. She was more prudent than some of the froufrou girls and high-kickers of the period, for example La Goulue, star of the famous Can-Can Quartette, who died on the rubbish-dump a few years ago after begging along the boulevards for a long time, the poor old butterfly.

This will never happen to Mistinguett, who must be extremely rich,

having been a near miss all her long life. Moreover, that baby is right. Whenever we meet a little carefree actress we ask her sympathetically how her Post Office book is getting along, a piece of pure objective altruism frequently leading to dirty looks. Nobody with a heart could help feeling anxious about the future of these little birds of Paradise, yet when you dig emotionally for your handkerchief they think you are digging for a rubber club. The man who would break open a little actress's money-box—it is generally a replica in tin of Wendy's hidey-hut, or else a tiny pillar-box, and sometimes it has teddy-bears painted on it—in cold blood cannot have been to a very good school.

No man was apparently ever bold enough to ask Mrs. Siddons how the rainy-day cash was piling up in the old bedsock. It is recorded that when Mrs. Siddons went into a draper's shop and asked for a yard of lace the assistant swooned at her terrific mien, which maybe explains why. Our feeling is that if little actresses loosened up and were matey when asked this question by well-wishers, chaps might give them pennies towards it.

Appassionata

DR. MALCOLM SARGENT'S admission that his orchestra "wept with emotion" during their Portuguese tour reminds us of an emotional Richter concert at Covent Garden during which one of the timpani found his poor old mother curled up asleep inside one of his side-drums. The whole orchestra cried, Richter cried, the audience cried, the critics cried, the box-office manager cried, everybody cried except the timpanum, who accused his mother of eating the sandwiches timpani keep in their drums. A sordid argument followed and everybody was ashamed for British manhood, a representative of Messrs. Hawkes, the eminent drum manufacturers, formally denouncing the heartless timpanum. "Everybody back, please, to the Andante quasi allegro, section D, page 67," said Richter, wiping his eyes.

Why orchestras cry so readily is one of the great enigmas of the music world (another is why tenors sing). Personally we connect it vaguely with the well-known emotional crises undergone by Damon Runyon's Broadway buddies, who get together at intervals to sing "It's a Long, Long Trail" and other tear-jerkers in close harmony, and are often so shaken by sobs that they take two slugs to get a passing friend.

Orgy

SUNDAY morning breakfast-parties probably did their bit to hasten the end, at 56, of Alexander Woollcott. Nine a.m. to 4 p.m. is a long time to keep up the mirific racket the average Woollcott party involved, especially when the massive host himself went berserk, as was this engaging wit and critic's habit. The normal strain of living in New York had many of his guests—mostly stage and film stars—pretty grey and lined already. After a sudden scream and dance from Woollcott at the poker-dice table you could see their hands jerking as if hung on wires.

Maybe Mr. Gladstone's celebrated weekday breakfast-parties at

10, Downing Street, though less noisy, got people down even more, their *raison d'être* being political and therefore ghastlier. After a long and close-knit discussion on Turkish atrocities or Irish Home Rule over the ham and eggs many a Liberal reeled into the morning sun of Whitehall ashy-faced and shaking, we guess. A certain amount of wife-beating was even then a Liberal tradition, old political hands assure us. The bustles of the late Victorian period enabled the innocent victims of untimely rising to preserve their dignity and poise to some extent. But no woman who is being whanged by a tall serious-minded whiskered figure in a frock-coat, with a tea-rose in the buttonhole, can be said to be entirely at her ease.

The political dinners of the Pitt era were a much more sensible idea. Everybody was more or less shwipsy on Bellamy's port to begin with, everybody, doubtless, talked at once, and when the survivors staggered out they had several hours of fun still ahead of them. Nor did anybody criticise. The idea that it matters what politicians say or do was suggested by a cynical Permanent Official much later.

Fat

FAT men all the world over will be waiting, we guess, to know the exact weight of the time-fused bomb which recently failed to blow up Henri Béraud, editor of *Gringoire*. Unless our memory stinkingly deceives, Béraud published, some years ago, *Le Martyre de l'Obèse*, the only sympathetic study of the sufferings of a fat man in love ever written. It was widely translated.

Béraud was then a chubby 100-kilo boy himself. Editing *Gringoire*, exuding a quite vitriolic hatred of the Island Race, and kowtowing of late to the Nazis may have sweated him down a trifle. Like his tenderness for the (non-British) obese, his loathing of Great Britain is quite sincere. What started it we've never heard. Maybe some too-jovial foxhunter or Rugger halfback trod on Béraud's pet corn in the cloakroom at Larue's or Maxim's one night. It's a strange superstition that the fat are invariably good-humoured and easygoing. They are quite often devils for irritability and viciousness, and those little eyes hidden in those rolls of sunset flesh can crackle with cold malice and fury. Compare the rage and cunning of the elephant, or the Historian Gibbon.

Knowing the weight of the bomb which exploded prematurely in Béraud's car at Lyons while he was lunching, fat men could calculate the amount of explosive required to send them up personally. Knowing this, fat men would not need to hurry so much when citizens toss, say, a Mills grenade in their direction.

Arch

HAVING great sympathy for our poor little Marble Arch, which always looks to us like the weakly illegitimate offspring of the Arc de Triomphe abandoned on London's stony doorstep to starve, we nevertheless feel that a recent suggestion to rename the Marble Arch corner "Tyburn" is interesting.

But a chap who has further suggested that Tyburn Tree should be re-erected just opposite and a few highwaymen, politicians, and financiers hanged on it after the war, to preserve London's historic continuity, seems to us to overrate the box-office appeal. Deadly Nevergreen, as our fathers called it, ceased to be London's best outdoor show—the highest-priced grandstand, as you observe from Hogarth's prints, stood on the site of the big cinema on the Oxford Street corner—when the last martyr was cut down alive and disembowelled. The hanging reserved for ordinary criminals was merely a brief anti-climax to their slow spectacular procession from Newgate, and some 18th-century fine lady or other complains bitterly in her diary of the expensive seats, the crush, the heat, the stink, and the poor entertainment. It was Sixteen-String Jack Rann, the modish highwayman, who swung on that occasion, bowing right and left, gaily costumed, with a nosegay in his coat and his charming mistress expiring publicly (she quickly recovered and married dashing Sir John Lade, leader of the Bright Young People of the period). The whole thing was over in five minutes, like a heavyweight boxing match.

Our feeling is that any impresario who speculated on a Tyburn revival nowadays would lose a packet. Apart from the vexing costume problem, no London crowd which has torn old ladies and frightened policemen to shreds in an effort to see Hollywood film actors in the flesh would excite itself over a financier's hanging, even at popular prices. If the impresario boys want to exploit the craze for rioting and blood, let 'em wait till Dame Shirley Temple comes over.

Splash

GENERAL MONTGOMERY resumed the offensive none too soon. Fleet Street was beginning to murmur ominously. At least two leader-writers were becoming really irritated with the Eighth Army's dilatory conduct. "The public," one of them wrote, meaning his owner, "wants victories." It was high time for the Army to appease these angry boys.

We took some trouble last week to find out what is considered a desirable minimum of victories. One substantial one per week was indicated. Naturally once the military authorities realise their duty they can put much more zing into it. The ideal front-page "splash," as everybody knows, would feature a mystery blonde in pyjamas leading a massed tank charge and capturing Rommel single-handed, crying "Yip-pee!"

This would indicate to our soul-mates and comrades (whom we love) that "Monty" was taking his job seriously. Amazing Desert Drama Sensation Bombshell Sequel. Mystery £2,000 Pyjama Joan of Arc Takes Tunis At Head of Army As Thousands Cheer. Mother's Cry: "I Always Knew Ivy Could Do It!" £500,000 Business Man in Tank Love Romance.

"I have always dreamed of leading a British Army to victory," said slim, sunburned, rose-lipped, laughing Miss Poodle yesterday, "and now I am glad I have done it. I have always been a registered reader of the *Daily Snoop*. Of course I have no military experience but I believe in the *Daily Snoop* policy of push and go. Until a brigadier invited me to sit on his tank I had no idea I was going to lead the troops, but everybody was awfully nice and I

am grateful to the *Daily Snoop* for the idea of wearing my pyjamas. My mother, who is also a registered reader of the *Daily Snoop*, is delighted. I have no plans at present, but I shall go away and think everything out very quietly, or else go on the stage."

Excuse these daydreams.

Vendetta

IT means nothing in our life that Hollywood has dug up Sherlock Holmes again and matched him with Nazi agents in Washington. It does matter to us that poor Dr. Watson (whom we love) is once more his stooge, and apparently as subservient and dumb as ever.

Every realist will agree that Watson's ultimate revenge on Holmes for all those years of bullying would make a far better "come-back" film than anything with a Nazi angle. Watson drunk and menacing. Watson silent and sinister. Watson leading Holmes up the garden, mixing the clues, cooking the evidence, deliberately confusing the Case of the Dancing Cabmen with the Case of the Rajah's Niblick, getting Holmes finally down and out, exhausted and half-dead, then turning the tables on him.

"Elementary, Holmes!"

"Eh?"

"I said 'elementary.'"

"Ur."

"My good Holmes, you seem dazed. Will you get the hell out of that arm-chair and solve this simple problem before I make you the laughing-stock of Scotland Yard, or will you lie there till I get a large dog named Ponto to bite you on your emaciated rump?"

At length, like the learned man and his shadow in Hans Andersen, Watson becomes master and exploits Holmes, who crawls round after him, weakly fawning, e.g.:

"Am I utterly marvellous, Holmes?"

"Yes, Watson, you are utterly marvellous."

"Am I the greatest amateur detective in Europe, Holmes?"

"Yes, Watson."

"Say after me, '*You, Watson, are the greatest, handsomest detective in the world, whereas I, Holmes, am a cretin, a charlatan, a sap, a moron, and a lousy, ugly, blue-chinned faker.*'"

"Yes, Watson. '*You, Watson, are the greatest*'" (etc.).

Pathetic, maybe, and even painful. But how just.

Contretemps

FOR describing the Russian winter the other week as "cold as a County cricketer's kiss" we are rebuked by a naval bloke who says his sister was once engaged five years to a County batsman, both of whose kisses were never much below 42° Fahr. Our conjecture is that maybe this batsman had a dash of Latin blood.

This question crops up, oddly enough, in one of those myriad trials

during the great European witchcraft epidemic of the 17th century. Like every other accused witch from the Orkneys to the Basque frontier, Elspeth M'Luckie of Kirriemuir, 45, charged with attending a witches' coven near Stirling on October 31, 1625, swore that the midnight Stranger's embrace struck a deathly chill. She added that he was dressed entirely in white flannel, with "gey cauld frosty frichtenin' blue e'en," carried a kind of willow stick or club, and wore a "braw cravat" in what seem to be M.C.C. colours, as yet of course unknown. This gave the Court a shock.

The Procurator-Fiscal: Ha'e a care, Elspeth M'Luckie, thou flichty quean, thou mommet, thou muckle puddock, thou hellicat, ha'e a care.

Bailie M'Qumpha: Ye ken fine she was lowpin' wi' the Deil himsel'.

Accused: Na, na, I doot 'twas naethin' but Elder Tamsie M'Whaup the warlock.

The Procurator-Fiscal: Sirs! Sirs! She must gang.

A clap of thunder then shook the Court and a tall cool immaculate figure arose at the back, exclaiming: "On giving a decision the umpire should make sure that the batsman understands what the decision is. See also Rule 43," and vanished. By the time the Court recovered the witch had vanished also. A curious case.

Grin

MONA LISA'S smirk is in the news again, we observe. She is one of the stolen Louvre pieces which the Boche will ultimately have to cough up, so the Foreign Office boys assure us on their honour.

Last time that sweetheart was in the headlines, you may recollect was in the 1900's, when some Freudian maniac cut her from her frame and walked off with her. There was a great bobbery for weeks, until she was found in a left-luggage office, if we remember rightly. The most thoughtful solution, offered by one of the smaller, redder Left Wing Paris papers many years later, was that it was a Jesuit plot against the Republic. And then, as now, the Fleet Street boys went into that matter of Mona Lisa's *sourire énigmatique*, quoting that tiresome piece of technicoloured flaffa by Pater. "*She is older than the rocks on which she sits. . .*" Our feeling is that Leonardo da Vinci would have begged Slogger Pater to put a lilac-silk sock in it.

Nothing seems to us less interesting than the Gioconda Smirk. It is known that while Leonardo was at work on her face he employed musicians to soothe her. Maybe the face of one of them reminded her she'd forgotten to order the Gorgonzola for luncheon. Compare the face of Catulle Mendès, which always reminded Léon Bloy of a Roquefort "ripe for parturition," a cheese of which he was very fond.

Challenge

DEEMING it his duty to defend the art of Charles Dickens against cretins who decry that master, one of the critic boys took about 1,200 words to say about Dickens what that awful girl Mrs. Dorothy Parker, of New York and Hollywood, once said in four vibrant lines:

Who call him spurious or shoddy
 Shall do so o'er my lifeless body ;
 I heartily invite such birds
 To step outside and say those words.

Possibly the same people were in Mrs. Parker's mind when she composed another stark little poem beginning :

If I had a shiny gun
 I could have a lot of fun
 Pumping bullets through the brains
 Of the folks who give me pains.

A fierce Old Roedean type, we thought. On meeting Mrs. Parker later we discovered a petite, dewy-eyed, charming, gentle, rather shy girl, with nothing fierce about her except a wistful longing to rid the earth of a few literary and other notables who, when all is said and done, could be easily spared. She didn't know, till we told her, that Barrie once had the same longing and wrote his first book, *Better Dead*, on that very topic. The fairies got Barrie later and he went "soft" on this project. Not so tiny Mrs. Parker, bless her.

Inhibition

A MUSIC critic who described a pianist as "somewhat fierce" revealed the timorous nature of those critic boys.

They've probably been in a state of inhibited terror since Liszt found a small white critic with pink eyes cowering in his pianoforte and took it home in a cage. A week later he caught another, waving its forepaws nervously behind a pile of MS. scores. Before long the cage was full of tiny, squirming creatures, which afforded Liszt's visitors great amusement, though several ladies objected to their habits. Ultimately Liszt let the biggest one go on its promising him a good notice in the Sunday papers. The notice began "M. Liszt, though a *frightfully fierce* pianist, is very kind and gentle in his home-life and provides *beautiful bread and milk* and bits of cheese for one and all," a fawning attitude which disgusted Liszt with the whole critic tribe.

Change

JOKES about Hitler are mercifully absent from this year's pantomimes, the critics report. Such self-discipline would have been welcome in World War I, when any pantomime comedian who did not exploit Kaiser Bill and address the orchestra at least six times as "You gentlemen in the trenches" was deemed a flop.

Every pantomime resembling every other pantomime, we're apt to suspect the well-known claim of Slogger Thackeray that on the morrow of every Boxing Day his pleasure was to lie in bed reading *The Times* pantomime notices "all the way down from Drury Lane to the Britannia at Hoxton." Our feeling is that Thackeray was demonstrating to his adoring public that he was Just One of Them ; it's the old Uncle Cheeriboy gambit in which so many of the big booksy boys indulge when their

agent tips them the warning signal. "Touting for affection" is Max Beerbohm's phrase for it.

Whether Thackeray really appreciated the pantomime convention is another question. You probably know that classic exclamation of a Victorian Demon King which sums up the whole business in two lines :

A piano in the woods ! Ah ! Here's my chance
To execute a little song and dance !

On the other hand, with these huge furry ears in January, 1917, as we were waiting glumly in a Midland hell for a train to return us to the Front, we heard a Demon King declaim these lines :

Black though I be, of a hero I'll sing,
Known to you all as "Powder-Monkey Jim."

Gesture

THROWN into a mild but agreeable stupor by a musical authority's remark, twice in six months, on the "democratic nature" of a certain famous British orchestra, we wonder still if those boys' fans are to be congratulated.

Most orchestras are necessarily a dictatorship. Under a truly "democratic" régime, no doubt, one of the oboes, a loud-voiced hectoring type, jumps up halfway through a symphony and waves his arms, at which everybody stops playing at once and this kind of conversation ensues between the oboe and the conductor, a weak type :

"Okay, Fishy, hold it. The boys have decided to take a vote on the Scherzo."

"What do you mean ?"

"Playing it or ducking it. Solidarity, see ?"

"You can't do that."

"Aw go cut yourself a slice of neck. . . . Well, boys, all in favour of ducking the Scherzo say 'Aye.' . . . The Ayes have it, Fishy."

The unfortunate conductor has nothing to say then but "Ladies and gentlemen, the boys have decided by a snap vote not to play the Scherzo, so this symphony, and this concert, is therefore at an end. Thank you." The orchestra has already packed up and left, the audience (such as are alive) stares dumbly at itself, and if you think this is wilful fantasy you aren't keeping up much with the busy little Left world-planning boys and girls, are you ?

Poet

WHAT'S wrong with the average British poetry boy, a chap tells us who was at a recent Poets' Club meeting and surveyed the inspired pans all round with no great enthusiasm, is that he doesn't get enough suffering, which notoriously improves poets' style.

If this implies that women should be hired to break the hearts of Poets' Club members, it is not a bad idea, at that. A critic once told the reason Wordsworth wrote so many sonnets like an old sheep sneezing

was that he romped round the Lakes with a milk-faced chit like Lucy instead of some *femme fatale* like Catullus' Lesbia. He said if Lucy had only met a few sailors it might have made all the difference.

We've since made arrangements to spring a sensation on the booksy world, when peace comes, with the discovery of some documents showing that a lot of jolly sailors hung constantly round Dove Cottage, Grasmere, romping with Lucy, teaching her to drink, smoke, chew, dance, haul a rope, make ships in bottles, handle a cutlass and a Portsmouth fiddle (a kind of oak club), and fight Bristol or Wapping fashion, generally developing that baby's self-expression. An expert forger will work this into a hitherto undiscovered portion of Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal. E.g.:

Tuesday, 17th June, 1803: Lucy's rough Naval friends plunged poor William's head in a keg of rumbo. Fearful scenes.

Friday, 20th June: Merry hell at Dove Cottage. Lucy dancing jigs with Salt-Horse Mullins, Fred Oakes, Spotted Dick Vumbles, Nosey Willows, J. Smith, H. Smith. — Watson, and other sailors whose names I did not catch. William quite distracted, neighing like mad.

More and more sailors arrive (apparently they got to know Wordsworth on that Calais trip), and eventually Lucy runs away to Jamaica with Salt-Horse Mullins, a gunner's mate in H.M. frigate *Ludicrous*, Capt. Rumbelow.

Handout

GENERALLY the discovery of a new B.B.C. star is broken to the world via Fleet Street something like this:

Less than a week ago charming fair-haired 17-year-old Ivy Poodle of 18B Gollancz Avenue, Tootham, was a scug-riveter in a big South London scug factory. Bending over her scug-riveting lathe Tuesday afternoon Ivy was overheard by a B.B.C. talent scout reciting the multiplication-table. *To-day Ivy is way up in the big money, rocketing right into the B.B.C. 30s.-a-week class, one of the rising song-stars of Bunk Buncombe's Voodoo Variety Hour!*

The handout for a recent 10-year-old prodigy who imitates the Hollywood stars was less exciting, we observed, though the B.B.C. has been "literally flooded with telephone inquiries" from an eager Race. (This may be merely the consecrated technical formula common to the Press boys. When they say their desk is "literally piled" with ardently approving letters from the public they mean that all three they've had, so far, are fairly coherent.) The lower emotional key introducing the new star seems to us all to the good, for all concerned.

The only infant prodigy in modern history, so far as we know, to reach maturity and still knock 'em being the pianist Solomon—it's a bit early to judge Menuhin, and most of our leading novelist boys and girls reach fourteen and disappointingly stay there—we needn't go sombre over the 10,000-to-one chance the average infant prodigy has of staying the course. The golden shores of artistic success are strewn with melancholy little bits of wreckage who needn't have dared the tempests and quicksands at all if Mumsie hadn't been such a fuss-pot. Incidentally we forgot our

old master James ("Boss") Agate, who at the age of 5 was correcting Bernhardt's delivery of Racine, and is now correcting everybody's delivery of everything, including the morning milk. But cases of the kind (as the refrain of a noted Chesterton Ballade goes) are rare.

Revolt

COMPLAINTS by a purple West End impresario of the dearth of dramatic authors seem to us to indicate that the worms are turning at last.

The freezing contempt of all stage people, and actresses especially, for anything resembling an author we know ourselves, to our cost. Mixed up some years ago in a West End revue, nothing wounded us so much at rehearsals as the way some little flippety actress, after lavishing liquid ogles and smiles on some horrible Levantine, oiled and curled like an Assyrian bull, would draw her skirts aside on meeting us in a corridor, avert her eyes, elevate her tiny nose, and flounce past as if we were cholera. "*Author!*" But for being perfect ladies, except at home, they'd have spat in our eye, we guess.

We carried our humiliated despair to a philosopher who advised us to read the memoirs of Gil Blas. That diverting chap once took a job as footman with a leading lady of the Madrid stage who entertained a great deal, and lo and look ye!

Our small lackey came in and said to my mistress loudly: "Madam, there is a man in dirty linen, all mud up to the neck, and begging your pardon he looks like a poet, and he wants to see you." "Let him be sent up," said Arsénie. "Don't move, gentlemen, it is an author."

So three hundred years ago as to-day we poor devils of the scribbling trade were treated like dirt by haughty actresses and their smart friends, observe. Well, the word has gone round at last.

Innovation

IN a recent interesting wedding-group, so far as any British wedding-group can be interesting, the bride and bridegroom had evidently made up their minds beforehand not to grin at the camera. They accordingly faced the world with an offended glare, highly refreshing.

Just as a study in frustration the Press photographer's mobile pan should have been inset as well, we thought. One sees too few photographs of the frustrated, who after all make up 75 per cent. of the population and include many notable figures—for example, Mussolini. The Brontës (Charlotte, Emily, Anne) have been cropping up in the papers lately in this connection. When everybody was writing Brontë plays a few years ago we wrote one which had a poignant Hardy-esque scene with Napoleon in it. Frustrated himself, Napoleon just wanted to get to the root of it all. The scene ended:

NAP.: You girls seem to *like* frustration,

CHARLOTTE: Yes.

NAP.: Good God,

(Walks up and down, hands behind back. Enter a Mr. Sol Biddlebaum, briskly.)

Mr. B.: Listen, cuties, ever been frustrated in a sister act on the slack wire?

Six months later, at the Casino de Paris, Les 3 Frustration Girls, Reines Tristes de l'Equilibre, are tearing 'em up. We got one of the Sunday highbrow producing societies interested in our play and then they dropped it. They said we were too tall, or something.

Trauma

IN connection with the hon. D.Litt. (Oxon.) conferred recently on Sir Max Beerbohm, one of the gossips recalled the "sardonic amusement" which Sir Max detected in the bearing of Irving, the first actor to be knighted.

Irving had every right to be sardonically amused, perhaps. To begin with he was doubtless aware that it might have been a baronetcy if he hadn't had offspring. And he probably had no difficulty in imagining the long and anxious discussions at Court before his knighthood was decided. Actors were then still a caste apart, bathed in mysterious and rather sinister glamour, like the phosphorescence round decaying fish. They have since been so careful to resemble Guardees and clubmen that this condition has now become normal, and the only well-known actor we personally know who looks like a well-known actor probably spends a couple of hours making up at his dressing-table every morning.

Having a few actor friends, including one or two of the kind called in Paris *matuvus* ("M'as-tu vu . . .?" = "Have you seen me in—?") and having also been a drama critic for six haggard months, we know all about the age-long vendetta between these boys. Drama critics often suffer from a trauma Harley Street calls "hystrioclaustrophobia," the fear of being trapped in an enclosed space with a lot of wild actors. We know that sudden panic. It is absurd and unmanly, and is brought on not only by nerves but drink. This is probably why West End managements thought of giving up first-night snifters for the critics. Forced to buy their own, the boys would roll in stone-cold sober and keep their seats.

Swoop

IN their swoop round Oran the American troops gave, we trust, a passing hello for old times' sake to Sidi-bel-Abbès, which has done so much for Hollywood.

Whether this dusty but romantic Aldershot of French Africa is still the headquarters of the Foreign Legion we can't discover. Anyhow it has given the novelist and film boys a good run, not to speak of all those indignant Anglo-Saxon deserters from the Legion who not long ago used to cash in on books saying what utter hell it was, how rude everybody was, how they never got a single game of cricket or a decent cup of tea, how un-English all those dark foreign faces were, and so forth. Whether this was more poodle-pie than the Beau Geste stuff is a nice question. Only

two Englishmen have dealt properly with the Legion, so far as we know — John Gibbons, who debunked all the fancy stuff a few years ago, and A. E. W. Mason, in one of whose earliest novels, *The Truants*, there are some admirable pictures of Legion life.

We once drew up a film-scenario for a British corporation with a scene showing a company-officer of the Legion kindly helping Legionnaire X at Sidi-bel-Abbès with his homework and reading through his MS. on the eve of desertion. It ended, rather sensationally :

CAPT. DUPONT : Admirable. A fearless exposé. Grips, horrifies, and fascinates. And who are your publishers, *mon enfant* ?

LEG. X : Goober and Goober, *mon capitaine*.

CAPT. DUPONT : Try Guttwaltz—he'll give you all the film-rights. Present my card and ask for "Tiny."

LEG. X : But—what do you know about London publishers, *mon capitaine*?

CAPT. DUPONT : I am one, you fool.

It turned out later that Capt. Dupont had a Good Woman in his Past, and for that reason the film boys turned our scenario down flat. Come clean, they said angrily. A good woman in a London publisher's life—quit foolin', boy, they said.

Coma

RATHER peevisly complaining of the "lethargy" of a London audience, one of the music critics forgot to say how many were dead and how many in a normal coma.

Jolly old Papa Haydn, who loved a joke, played a memorable trick on audiences with his "Surprise" Symphony. That soft, soothing slow movement, a perfect lullaby, is well under way, and the congested dead-pans are snoring sweetly, when suddenly a terrific fortissimo bang wakes everybody up and scares the natal stuffing out of one and all. Whether this is a better Haydn joke than his "Farewell" Symphony, in which the musicians vanish one by one as the lights go out, leaving only the conductor, it is difficult to decide. Sucks—boo to the audience when it wakes a few hours later and finds itself alone in the dark, certainly. But most musicians we know would rather have the crueller satisfaction of the "Surprise."

Another way to combat the old Island beri-beri would be to employ doctors to run round the concert-hall with lancets, letting a little blood from the comatose. That exquisite American clown Herb Williams, lately dead, used at recitals a grand pianoforte full of hens, water, coal, ironmongery, and whatnot, which poured out in torrents whenever he kicked his piano in the slats, waking up the dumbos with a violent start. Ourselves, we'd let 'em sleep and trip softly home to beddy-byes after playing the first five or six bars.

Chase

MOST armies, remarked a military authority recently, pointing out that perpetually to ridicule the Italian Army wasn't helping to drive that desirable wedge between the Italian people, still our friends, and

Mussolini, retreat at some time or other. The Italians ran at Caporetto, but stood admirably firm at the Piave.

We've just been looking up Mercer's account of Lord Uxbridge galloping like mad after his fleeing hussars at Quatre Bras just before Waterloo, yelling "Faster, faster, for God's sake! They'll get you!" Mercer says it was just like a fox-hunt, and the French lancers were so close on the heels of Uxbridge's hussars that their laughter and insults could be heard by the fugitives above the storm and battle-noises. Why the Island Race at large should pretend such episodes don't happen we can't conceive. There's no military disgrace in hopping out of a bad patch quickly. Uxbridge's hussars came back at Waterloo and wiped out that score neatly. Sir John Moore was hard to catch in the scamper from Corunna, but Wellington stood at Torres Vedras and ultimately won the campaign.

The thing is to know you'll come back. De Colbert's lancers at Quatre Bras enjoyed the chase more because they were well aware it might be their turn to run before the day was over (it wasn't, as it happened). It's the non-military boys, journalists and poets and the like, who take these setbacks to heart. Their stinking little egocentric vanity—how it grieves us. Ring up Mumsie and say it's not the *stomach*, it's the *heart*.

Pick-me-up

REPORTING that the most-read poet in suffering France to-day is Charles Péguy, a Sunday paper authority had to go and spoil it by calling Péguy the Rupert Brooke of France.

Except that Péguy was killed in action on the Western Front in 1914, a month after war broke out, at the age of forty, he has about as much in common with Rupert Brooke as we have with Gengis Khan. Péguy's spiritual fire and metaphysical depth make Brooke's verse sound like a clever schoolboy's, if we may say so without offending Mrs. Growle. In his best-known war piece, which begins:

*Heureux ceux qui sont morts pour la terre charnelle
Mais pourvu que ce fut dans une juste guerre . . .*

—the second line alone carries a universal philosophy.

If the French are reading Péguy they are giving their national spirit a pretty good tonic, which cannot be said for the fans of poor little Mr. Auden and a few other nervesick, petulant minstrel boys and wilting flowers of the moment.

There's a good parody of this little group by William Empson, called, reasonably enough, *Just a Smack at Auden*, which begins:

Waiting for the end, boys, waiting for the end,
What is there to be or do?
What's become of me or you?
Sitting two and two, boys, waiting for the end.

There must be something wrong with World War II if it spawns poets like that. Better British poets fell in action last time—Grenfell, Ledwidge,

Wilfred Owen, Sorley, and the rest. We don't know the answer, or at least we do, but it would seem awfully rude.

Worker

NINETY-YEAR-OLD Mr. Louis N. Parker, who has had more than 100 plays produced on the British and Continental stage, as a gossip recorded on meeting him last week, has still a little leeway to make up before he approaches the all-time record, which is Lope de Vega's.

Lope's total is 1,500 comedies, so far as is known. In his spare time he wrote verse and other things. A lot of his time was taken up also with naval service (he fought with the Armada) and making love to women, like most playwrights and sailors; and it's our theory that he jotted down most of his 1,500 plays while waiting for girls to turn up at 7.30. Oh, Señor de Vega! A quarter to nine! Am I terribly late? Oh dear no, *mi alma*, I've only written four acts in verse and a couple of sonnets, you milk-faced baggage. Spanish chivalry forbade Lope's striking the fribble (and anyway it was difficult in the days when women enclosed their dainty torsos in great cages of whalebone) but there may have been times when he begged the beloved between his teeth to beat it, having just arrived at the point where Felipe enters with Isabella's heart on a dagger, looking vaguely annoyed.

This theory, now we think of it, egad, explains all the bloody-mindedness of the minor Elizabethan dramatists, Webster, Tourneur and Co. Women kept them waiting and they saw red. Compare once more Browning's cry of rage when Miss Barrett chucked a luncheon-date at Prunier's:

Never the time, and the plaise, and the loved one all together!

Is there a Professor of Poetry in the house? Duck, boy.

Angle

A PROPOS the Grace Darling centenary, Auntie *Times* dug out an interesting news-item from her files of a century ago. Apparently the modest heroine turned down flat a big offer from the eminent Mr. Yates, of the Adelphi Theatre, London, to star in a sensational melodrama built round her exploit.

Publicity being then in its infancy, Mr. Yates's whiskered and plaid-trousered publicity department seems to have chucked it in and put up no sure-fire alternative proposition. To-day they'd be going into feverish huddles, holding conference after conference.

"What's your angle, Joe?"

"Well look, Sam, what about maybe she'd do just a song-and-dance ensemble, I mean all the girls rowing boats and flags of all nations and boopadoop and what have you."

"That's a lousy angle, whaddya say, Izzy?"

"Well my angle is it's like this, Sam, I was reading in *Variety* where a Follies dame that shot up a guy she got hot publicity riding through town in a wheelbarrow with nothing on only a few feathers."

"Like hell we'd get away with that, like hell we would."

"Listen, maybe if she wore tights——. Well, Ike?"

"Well, my angle is we should ought to keep evvything refined, I mean the old mother-angle and roses round the door and all that dope, I mean. Or maybe if we shot her from a gun."

Eventually an elaborate final scheme is worked out combining these features, Miss Darling turns it down bang, and the boys are fired by Mr. Yates and go into the big-time racket as Swiftsure Publicity Ltd., Public Relations Counsels, bending their massive brains to a campaign for launching Bingo for Bandy Legs.

Oasis

MURDER in Hardy's Wessex surprises some people more than it does us, judging by the recent fuss over a murder-mystery at a village near Dorchester.

The only thing that amazes us about Dorset is that so many of its inhabitants still go on struggling to exist, blind victims of monstrous overbeetling Fate whose misery poor little Mr. Hardy was the first to detect. In Shropshire the position is slightly different, despite the sombre surprise of Hugh Kingsmill contemplating a Shropshire Lad :

What, still alive at twenty-two,

A clean upstanding chap like you ?

The difference being that whereas Hardy lived slap among the Wessex hayseeds, damp and despondent, Housman lived comfortably in Cambridge and made up the Shropshire stuff at long distance out of his head. So the rural fatalists round the Wrekin often go on living to spite him, out of pure rustic malice.

We lately had a eugenic brainwave on this topic. If Shropshire Lads were forced to marry Wessex girls their offspring would presumably be as handy with the knife from birth as any Sicilian, thus providing the Government with natural-born Commando troops grown, as it were, under glass. The "dominant", as Mendelians say, being the mother, there'd be no fear of that suicidal Shropshire urge coming first. "Business avoëre pleasure," as Tess of the d'Urbervilles said to the chartered accountant.

Correction

INCREASING restrictions on railway travel are all right with us. We can never understand why the Island Race wants to move from place to place anyway ; it looks just as attractive squatting on its hams and gazing bewildered into space.

Incidentally we were wrong the other week, a chap points out, over Baudelaire's famous lines :

Etonnants voyageurs ! quelles nobles histoires

Nous lisons dans vos yeux profonds comme les mers !

It wasn't the 9.18 from Surbiton at Waterloo, but the Southern Belle

from Victoria which inspired this, he says, and we find he's right, on looking it up. Baudelaire was watching the stockbrokers streaming off Brighton platform, waving their hands about and arguing with dainty but suspicious blondes.

"But honestly, little girl, I'm just a dreamer myself."

"Some dreamer you are, Mr. Goldenkranz, I'll say that."

"Don't call me Mr. Goldenkranz, little girl, call me Laddie."

"Oh, I couldn't do that, Mr. Goldenkranz, not if it was ever so."

"I suppose it's my new plus-fours put you off?"

"Oh, no, Mr. Goldenkranz, not no plus-fours it isn't, I give you *my* word."

"Hi! Taxi!"

Baudelaire was so fascinated by this spectacle that he took a room at the Cosmopole and was very, very ill, but managed to get the Stock Exchange into one more poignant line:

Et toujours le désir nous rendait soucieux.

In other words, Love is just one more big worry for tired business men (dictated but not signed).

Revolt

ONE thing about being as wealthy as Mr. Sidney Beer and able to conduct a symphony orchestra of one's very own (a musical chap points out to us) is that one can get the tympani and other part-time workers doing something useful in their off-moments, such as knitting socks for deep-sea fishermen or addressing charity-appeal envelopes.

Ludwig ("the Mad") of Bavaria, who mounted Wagner's operas for his sole pleasure, did not seem to insist on this discipline, which every concert-goer knows is desirable. During passages for strings alone, this chap avers, half the drums and other percussion are dozing, eating, or making signals to women in the audience, a trick greatly resented by well-bred girls. The cynical expression of the oboes as their eyes rove is also objected to. Indeed, the wood-wind as a whole seem to respect British womanhood very little. If a conductor does not care to bawl his "boys" out midway through a symphony ("Arf a mo, you hoboes!") he can at least keep them constantly employed, either by having extra parts written into every score (*e.g.*, a continuous drum-and-fife *alla marziale* obbligato to the *Pelléas* overture) or finding them "outside" work, as above. Is Mr. Ernest Newman in the house? Hello there, sir.

Glimpse

FAINTLY Beerbohmesque, that vision of the Poetry Society boys and girls sitting round in Portman Square next month listening to gramophone records made by Alfred Lord Tennyson reciting his own verse seems to us, for some reason.

What would be more worth hearing, in our degraded view, would be a full recording, with sound effects, of the interview between Tennyson and that American fan who crossed the Atlantic to recite *Maud* to him.

Victoria's Laureate could notoriously use Tank Corps language when beset by people who startled, upset, annoyed or bored him. That famous growl to the poor little deb at the dinner-party, "Your stays creak!" was nothing to what that lofty-minded big boy could do when all-out, as an unfortunate clergyman blasted nearly to death once discovered. A newsreel of what happened when the American fan started on Tennyson would be worth charging West End prices for.

Viewing the big boys in their off-moments is a perpetual fascination, apart from conveying the moral lesson that they are only human. You can have all the impressive public performances of Napoleon, Disraeli, and Gladstone. What we'd like to hear is what Gladstone said in 1887 when he stepped on a tintack in his nightie.

Fodder

URING the Island Race to eat more potatoes and less bread, the Min. of Food boys might point out that in the most hellish period of the Penal Laws in Ireland the Irish footmen and sedan-chairmen of Mayfair were huge brawny chaps with bulging calves, as Dr. Johnson noticed. This was due to (or in spite of) living on potatoes from birth; a diet more rich in vitamins than the nettles and grass the Irish were allowed to live on in the Great Famine of the 1840's.

The Running Footman pub in Mayfair still preserves the memory of those vanished braves, Irish or English, who had a pretty good time as good times went in that age, and, if their manly charms pleased my lady, might, when she tired of them, be bought a Line commission and live as drunk as David's sow, or H.M. Foot Guards in Hogarth's picture of the March to Finchley.

How many ex-footmen commanded English platoons at Culloden we don't know. Judging from Smollett and other eighteenth-century satirist boys, fighting was not so much their tea as swagger and seduction behind the lines, the merry devils. What were we talking about? Potatoes? Oh, yes—the food boys seem to be trying to find a reason why the Race doesn't devour more potatoes already, without urging. Would that feeling of fratricide be a reason, one wonders?

Smash-Hit

MENTIONING that the late charming light composer Walter Leigh had been at work on the music for a film about herself, Auntie *Times* coyly left the pop-eyed populace guessing as to the nature of this film.

Our own guess is that it's a decent version of *The Front Page*. In place of those snarling Chicago newspaper toughs in eyeshades and shirt-sleeves, dignified white-bearded gentlemen move to and fro in Palladian halls, discussing the day's news in carefully modulated flute-like voices, thus:

"I observe, Faughaghton, that a report from a source of impeccable veracity indicates that China has been engulfed by a tidal wave."

"Surely, Tiddingham, that borders on the sensational?"

"I thought perhaps five lines on a rearward page——"

"Recollect, Tiddingham, that the modicum of space at our disposal for items of a startling nature, if I may permit myself the word, is already devoted by common consent to a communication from a clergyman of unblemished reputation intimating that while perambulating a field in Berkshire he recently detected the distinctive note of the chiffchaff."

(Enter a Majordomo.)

"Gentlemen, the Editor desires your presence in the inner sanctum for the purpose of deliberating, or perhaps animadverting upon, a proposal from the Gardening Editor so fraught with opportunist cynicism that it cannot but cause the bosom to heave, the cheek to flush."

"Cor! Did you ever!"

That last exclamation comes from a Temporary Assistant Social Editress, a tiny ravishing blonde who ultimately saves *The Times* by knitting a set of new type just in time after a blitz. The film ends (we're still guessing) with Love burgeoning somewhere in the Ads. Dept. and a long, long kiss, presaging eternal sunshine down Life's pathway. Or what?

Démenti

WE were wrong, it appears, when we speculated the other week that Wisden's Almanack is nowadays full of French pictures, probably. The Editor has kindly sent us a copy of the last edition, most of which, despite the yellow covers, is perfectly suitable for general reading and may be put into the hands of any gently nurtured British girl.

Maybe we were thinking of *The Yellow Book* and those Aubrey Beardsley and Félicien Rops cricket illustrations of the 'nineties. The Beardsley drawing *La Tentation de St. Trumper*, showing Trumper being tempted at the wicket by a naked, sinuous, laughing hussy with wicked kohl-darkened eyes performing the Dance of the Ouled-Naïls, was pretty decadent. So was the Rops drawing *Nocturne: Orgie chez la M.C.C.*, showing obvious Brueghel and Goya influences in its rather shocking diablerie. There was quite an uproar in *The Times* over the Beardsley *Tentation*, the well-known amateur Mr. W. G. H. R. F. J. Cooke-Cooke claiming hotly that this kind of incident was practically unknown on a Lord's pitch and several indignant archdeacons crying shame. On the other hand "fast" French actresses certainly did hang round the pitch in those days and County cricketers drank champagne out of their slippers.

When Arthur Rimbaud was *The Times* Cricket Correspondent he was absolutely sickened by these goings-on, as you can read in his report of the Surrey-Sussex match of 1899, afterwards called *Le Bateau Ivre*:

But truly I have wept too much. The dawns are intolerable;
Every moon is atrocious, every sun is galling. . . .

and again, after the tea interval:

I have seen the low sun stained with mystic horrors. . . .

However, our cricket boys have turned over a new leaf since then,

thanks to Archbp. Fry, Bishop J-rd-ne, Archdeacon H-bbs, and other social workers, who have cleaned up the Pavilion considerably, people tell us.

Panache

TROLLOPE fans have been sitting up and waving their forepaws anxiously ever since Auntie *Times* recently published a newly discovered letter written by Trollope during Mrs. Trollope's lifetime, offering a Miss Sankey his heart and hand *en secondes nocces*. Probably just a joke, those boys pipe eagerly, deeming that it matters.

Not being a Trollope fan, we admire that novelist principally because he sat down, frock-coated and cigar in mouth, at his desk regularly every morning and polished off his daily quota of fiction, like a Civil Servant. The very finest Havanas they were, stacked in cabinets by his desk. Ripe mahogany and roast beef and vintage port and massive silver cutlery, that's Slogger Trollope, who habitually did himself well; no damned nonsense about art and inspiration and genius-starving-in-a-garret about that boy, no Café Royal posings, no absinthe and dandruff and temperament and dirty finger-nails. You knew when you bought a Trollope novel you were getting solid value for money.

There's another specimen of booksy *panache* we admire almost as much—that of the eminent Spanish novelist Don Ramón Maria del Valle-Inclán y Montenegro de la Puebla del Caramiñal, a noble fanfare for a visiting-card. Valle-Inclán, who died a few years ago, was as fantastic as his name, tall, aquiline, thin, masterful, with a superb flowing grey beard and hair, thick black eyebrows, and horn spectacles. That's the stuff to knock the fans bowlegged, given the talent to carry it off, and we suggest to some of our best-selling booksy boys who look like paunchy mice that they visit Clarkson's right away and look at the wigs, for a start.

Stare

BIRD-WATCHING, on which topic one of the Nature boys was giving tongue over the air the other night, seems to us one of the eeriest occupations devised by man, especially if the bird is watching you simultaneously. Reciprocal hypnosis can be the only outcome.

Believing that all staring, as Nanny used to assure us, is extremely rude, we've often wanted to put this hypothetical case to a bird-watcher to see what he makes of it :

You are immovably watching a great crested grebe, which is watching an owl watching a policeman watching a member of the Royal Observer Corps watching some minx or mopsy watching the Birmingham Watch Committee watching Marlene Dietrich watching Professor Huxley watching a chimpanzee which is watching you. Given that some of these stares are returned, who can officially be said to be watching whom ?

A frantic imbroglio, indeed ; but we gather the situation rarely arises, apart from the fact that the Royal Observer Corps never observe women, though if the alarm goes they can readily distinguish one from the other

by the markings on the fuselage (emergency charts showing various types of women, a member tells us, hang in every R.O.C. post). Hence the easiest way of cutting the Gordian knot above is to assume that the bird-watcher suddenly smashes the spell by rolling a lewd bloodshot eye from the great crested grebe to the minx or mopsy and the whole séance breaks up in confusion and disgust, Professor Huxley's protests ringing loud and shrill.

Often than you imagine this lapse from duty may happen. We're thinking of a remark of that eminent Nature observer Professor Bud Flanagan: "Down in the forest something stirred; it was only a note from a bird."

Talk

MONEY-FOR-OLD-ROPE seems to be the ideal state of the German spy racket in Great Britain at the moment, we perceive. Even Whitehall is realising that all the laziest enemy agent has to do is to toddle into the nearest pub, train, club, or restaurant, and listen to the Army and the chaps-who-know.

In World War I the soldiery kept its dainty trap shut, relatively speaking; maybe the old-fashioned discipline of that bygone age helped. To-day our old buddy Alfred Lord Tennyson would note that the babble he prophesied might one day bring old England down is universal, and that (oddly enough) the dumbest make most noise. When M. André Philip, of General de Gaulle's entourage, remarked recently that democracies talk too much he was probably thinking chiefly of the late Third Republic, where the *beau parleur* was more lavishly rewarded with power, money, women and champagne than in any other political racket in history. But if the French had spellbinders like Gambetta, who practically never stopped talking (and whose principal sweetie-pie, Léonie Léon, was in German pay, incidentally, according to Léon Daudet), we also had and have our own aces, chief of whom is at this moment probably making long emotional gabble to the cows and chickens in his Arcadian retirement. And now the public is catching the habit.

There was a folksong or dirge of the Island Race a few years ago with the refrain:

'E's a dear old pal,
Jolly ole pal,
But 'e opens 'is marf too wide.

Tennyson would glumly approve that. Maybe Tennyson wrote it?

Slip

UNLESS these bloodshot old eyes deceive, the Polar Medal ribbon, which already adorned the breast of Commander Ryder, R.N., when he received the V.C. recently for his work in the St. Nazaire raid, is snowy white, striking and rare.

Last time we saw the Polar ribbon at a reception we were tempted and fell. A terrible woman novelist kept asking us what it was. At last we

said desperately it was the new Government decoration for cricketers of outstanding purity. The conversation continued :

"Any special act ?"

"Spurning the kisses of those French actresses."

"What French actresses ?"

"Those who hang round Test pitches and try to lure our heroes into Continental folly or worse."

"I never heard that before."

"Incredible ! Why, that's what Trumper got the Order of Chastity from the Sultan for in 1898."

"What did he do ?"

"Tore a little wanton named Zozo La Follette from the arms of W. G. Grace as he strode to the wicket."

"So the Sultan gave Trumper the Order of Chastity ?"

"Fifth Class, without palms. He also added 500 gold sequins to the M.C.C. harem's credit-account for hats at Doucet's."

That betrayed us, for she knew full well no M.C.C. harem would ever get its hats at Doucet's, but at the Army and Navy Stores. Which just shows how careful you have to be, even with women.

Rite

DISAPPOINTINGLY, an expert who has announced triumphantly that it has taken a recent Act of Parliament to abolish the final button on the Race's waistcoat didn't explain why this sacred button could never be worn fastened, except by utter cads.

Whether it was a safety precaution we strongly doubt. In those well-known eighteenth-century prints of young Mr. Edward Bright, of Maldon (Essex), who weighed 45 stone, the last 25 buttons or so of his nobly convex waistcoat are obviously left unfastened lest young Mr. Bright should burst and blow Maldon (Essex) skyhigh. One single unfastened button would never protect anybody. Our feeling is that this button fetish is a fertility rite, like cricket and philately and the Primrose League. Sedulously to observe a fertility rite while simultaneously practising race suicide would be just one more of those manifestations of the *morbus britannicus* in which Cloud-Cuckoo Land excels, and which charm us perpetually.

You needn't trouble to write and tell us it's just an Etonian custom peculiar to "Pop," "Pop" itself being the Island equivalent of the Spring corn dance and boiled dog feast of the Iroquois Nation. Or so Frazer, or maybe Fowler (*Modern English Usage* Fowler) told Myra, who would never have breathed a word about it to Mumsie if Dusty hadn't been so awful about Stinker.

Spotlight

UNLIKE Barrie, whom a critic driven nuts by roguey-poguey once rather savagely described as "backing nervously into the limelight," the late Ernest Bramah, brilliant creator of Kai Lung and the detective

Max Carrados, really hated and avoided publicity of every kind all his life.

At the P.E.N. Club the boys and girls are probably—we conjecture, for it's years since we romped in that noble bowing ken—tapping their foreheads and muttering that Allah is all-merciful. For it's a harassing life, struggling daily to keep in the booksy spotlight. Yet the racket has never developed here as it did in France. We remember a well-known bookshop on the Boulevards with a regular "feature" window tastefully displaying not only 500 copies of the latest Morand or Dekobra, but a selection of interesting personal "props," such as the novelist's boots, hat, pen, spare set of false teeth, and Sunday pyjamas, a bone gnawed by his favourite doggie, the photograph and baptismal certificate of his Great Aunt Euphrosyne, and so forth. At a table in the shop the big boy would be himself visible, exquisitely groomed, smiling, and bland, signing copies for every purchaser. That's literary publicity, that was, and does it make our booksy go-getters look like fifty cents!

Apropos Barrie, a mild dollop of girlish flafia about the Peter Pan statue in war-time by a Fleet Street sob-sister who was in Kensington Gardens recently reminded us that one hears far too little about fairy activities nowadays.

Our information is that since a tough Australian fairy named Digger Jake Malone socked Peter Pan on the snoot (and about time, too) a couple of months ago in the Tittlebat Lounge, things have been running more smoothly in the Commonwealth Fairies' Club established by Little Mother Wendy in the Gardens last year. The object of the Club is to co-ordinate fairy efforts in assisting the Imperial General Staff in strategy and tactics and helping the Government generally. Every corner of the British Commonwealth is represented, and the Financial Secretary is a stout fairy named Weissmuller. Little Mother herself has come in for a few slaps, bumps, whirrets, and pinches for—as a big fairy from Moose Jaw laughingly expressed it—putting on too much goddam dawg, and is now meekly toeing the line. The Executive Committee are concentrating at the moment on fuel-rationing and have already suggested some sweet cuddly ideas to Whitehall in its dreams, for which Sir William Beveridge has so far had the credit.

Tinker Bell's fate is unknown. Last time everybody was asked to clap as usual to save that little pest from dying, most of the fairies were attending a cocktail party in the Long Walk to welcome an American delegation, and were so plastered with a new snifter called Butterfly's Heartache that nobody took any notice, which seems too bad, or good.

Bouquet

LORD VANSITTART'S timely warning about the "English pseudo-intellectuals" who are already beginning to weep and snivel for the poor Germans, as before, reminds us that chaps who need a handy synonym for these high-browed Bloomsbury cretins have only to turn up Urquhart's translation of Rabelais' *Gargantua*, where they will find the bakers of Lerne describing Gargantua's shepherds as :

Pratling gablers, lickorous gluttons, freckled bittors, mangie rascals, slye knaves, drowsie loiterers, slapsauce fellowes, slabberdegullion druggels,

lubbardly lowts, cozening foxes, paultrie customers, sycophant varlets, drawlatch hoydons, flouting milksops, staring clowns, forlorn snakes, ninnie lobcocks, scurvie sneaksbies, fondling fops, base lowns, sawcie coxcombs, idle lusk, scoffing braggards, noddie meacocks, blockish grutnols, doddipol joltheads, jobbernot goosecaps, foolish loggerheads, slutch calfiollies, grout-head gnatsnappers, lob-dotterels, gaping changelings, codshead loobies, woodcock slangams, ninnnyhammer flycatchers, and noddiepeak simpletons.

We've left out a few good ones, at that. Ring up Myra and say Mumsie feels much better since she learned to sing this list, and is dancing a coranto in the drawing-room.

Ink

"NO man but a blockhead," said that great Englishman, Dr. Samuel Johnson—would he were alive!—"ever wrote, except for money." Which dictum throws a soft, diffused light on the 132 letters a day a British infantry prisoner in Germany has been getting since, as his camp-leader complained to the Red Cross, he "drew attention to himself as a lonely soldier," thereby causing his comrades' mail from home to be held up, and a lot of language.

One is apt to wonder how many of these 132 letters are dictated by (1) pure human kindness, and (2) that curious public itch for self-expression (gratis) which we professional inky boys can never understand. A third motive, which led the military authorities some time ago to ban a myriad self-elected "pen-pals," does not apply in this case. It would be interesting to know how many military secrets were extracted in this way and sped Berlin-ward in those far-off days, and how many eager home-girls, refined, fond of flowers and music and sympathy and asking artless girlish questions about guns and troop movements, turned out to be chaps with bristly chins and furtive eyes, and were slung into the can.

Inevitably there must have been slip-ups. A classic one we remember often is that of Miss Evans, known to Literature as George Eliot, employed by the Russian Secret Service during the Crimean War and caught by our Intelligence in Japanese costume, passing herself off as Hon. Miss Summer Moonlight On Old Flaked Rice, a geisha from Kobe. "My mistake, boys, it's the wrong war," said the big girl frankly. She was just 40 years too early for the siege of Port Arthur, which just shows you.

Glaze

THERE are times (as a soldier in the Middle East wrote in one of the weeklies the other day) when the word "England" summons up a vast, drab, hideous suburb packed with film-fans and readers of the *Daily Excess*, serried millions of vacant dopey pans in execrable bowler hats. And there are times, he added, when the word "England" summons up everything noble and lovely; especially when you're out of it and can't get back.

Whistling the two opening bars of the pipe-music in Justice Shallow's orchard from Elgar's *Falstaff* gives us this better England constantly, even when we're in the middle of the other; for which reason we're

hoping, not very optimistically, that *Falstaff* will have been performed by the B.B.C., by the time you read this, for Elgar's eighty-fifth anniversary programme. The B.B.C. imagination, never very good, is so atrophied nowadays that "Elgar" connotes to those boys the Enigma Variations and nothing else. Whereas *Falstaff* is pure England, the old rich, free, gracious England, before the Bowler Hats got it. The Winged Hats were adequately dealt with centuries ago. Who can rid us of the Bowler Hats? (You probably wear one yourself.) The bowler hat is not an article of headgear but a state of mind. Ring up the Board of Fisheries and say Mumsie says that awful glazed look in Stinker's eye is driving poor darling Muriel mad.

Phenomenon

LESLIE HENSON'S reproduction of the Joad beard, incidentally, is masterly, except in one respect. Mr. Henson's ersatz fuzz has no dark Machiavellian life of its own, and cannot work at night while its master sleeps, germinating and secreting those curious answers which so bemuse and metagrobolise the Race. Combing these out next morning is a simple process. If this feverish midnight generation of poohbah once stopped, the whole Brains Trust would dissolve at once into a heaving, greyish, bubbling, amorphous mass of lukewarm pulp. Not even an artist like Mr. Henson can reproduce such a sinister fungus as this beard, and—we ask with a light shudder—who the devil wants to?

Reaction

A CRITIC'S recent remark on the monstrous regiment of booksy girls who brazenly exploit their own erotic and other adventures will doubtless remind poetry-lovers of Olivia's pathetic little song in *The Vicar of Wakefield*:

When lovely Woman stoops to folly,
And finds her hopes have been mistook,
She rings her publisher, by golly,
And writes another stinking book.

Don't look round yet, but one of these sweethearts just passed us, flying her own broomstick.

Scourge

OUR frequent suggestion that little actresses should, when not actually making faces or reciting lines or hanging by their toes on the public stage, be kept in boxes, never fails to start some soppy humanitarian—generally in the Navy—bawling us out. But a new book about Charles Dickens shows once more how right we are.

Dickens, when he fell for a little actress, behaved vilely to his unfortunate family, as is well known. For some reason chaps go much crazier over actresses than over other women. We're compiling a list of a few

leading cases against the time Our Dumb Chums' League order Herbert Morrison to sling us in the can. The great Stendhal, for instance, once became a grocer's assistant in Marseilles for an actress's sake. Baudelaire's mulatto, the soubrette Jeanne Durand (who never had more than one line to speak at any time—namely "*Madame est servie*") sent Baudelaire half nuts with despair, and Berlioz also went through hell for some English stage minx, hussy or wanton whose name escapes us. Peg Woffington drove Garrick to rewrite Shakespeare and one look at Ellen Terry sent 1,500 chaps in glossy top hats into such a frenzy of madness that they seemed almost alive.

Our argument is that being kept in boxes between performances would lessen the power for mischief these brightly coloured little creatures possess, and they could always have hoops to swing from.

Tip

THAT old scourge "Beachcomber" certainly rang the bell the other day when he said the easiest way to make a packet out of writing your memoirs nowadays is to concentrate on a whacking great index including every headline name you can think of.

This trick never fails with the suckers, even if, after looking up (for example) "Agate, James, 8, 15, 20, 25-47, 50, 56, 58, 64-79, 108, 145-156, 189-224, 230, 245, 261, 289-365," the hamfaced reader turns feverishly to page 8 and finds once and for all:

I never actually met Mr. James Agate, but I understand he is a charming person, very fond of Bernhardt and other horses.

Almost as profitable a trick, when writing biography, is to put a huge bibliography at the end, copying from encyclopædias and other sources the title of every book in the world bearing on your subject, however remotely, and thus knocking the hamfaced reader bowlegged with your learning and industry. The late regretted Archie Macdonell once played the brotherhood a dirty trick by writing a fine book on Napoleon's Marshals and adding a note saying (in effect) the hell with all bibliographies, they're just boloney. This did him no good with the serious critics, who assumed he'd done it all out of his own head, and serve him right.

Rubberpan

TIGERISH grimacing and yelling of hate formulas by their instructors now goad and inspire troops engaged in assault courses at every Battle Drill school, one gathers; showing how far we have travelled in the direction of zing and pep already since those amiable days, not so long ago, when to a certain extent

... chiefless Armies doz'd out the Campaign,
And Navies yawn'd for Orders on the Main.

This psychological angle isn't new, of course; we've recalled once before that fearful Scottish Major, the bayonet expert, who toured "rest" billets in the last war, prancing and thrusting and howling and grimacing

and terrifying everybody. That expert ploughed a lonely furrow, in our experience, and many battalion commanders did not consider him a gentleman. Making vivacious faces is not an Island accomplishment, outside the theatre world, and it was pathetic in those days to see some round-faced, ruddy, kindly Hampshire or Dorset rustic trying to imitate the Boy Thunderbolt, the Human Gargoyle. To-day, apparently, making faces is part of the normal training, and post-war Britain ought to benefit enormously by exchanging the old wooden dead-pans for rubber ones.

Cricket will benefit especially. We can see the post-war Lord's crowd, its mobile features dramatically registering every swift emotion, ecstasy, fear, pain, bliss, rage, despair, like a Sicilian riot, and the Sacred Pitch itself looking like a monkey-house as the heroes jabber and gesticulate, or, like Garrick, galvanise the mob with a single grimace. Maybe aged scientists spurred by envy will lean out of the Athenæum windows and make hideous faces at good women as they pass. The Committee's problem will be to weed out the ones who appear to be making an effort.

Rival

A PROPOS beards—a ticklish subject, as the little actress said shyly to the President of the British Association—the modesty of Mr. Marsland Gander, the *Daily Telegraph's* Special Correspondent in the East, who shaved his off on assuming khaki because he didn't want to appear a rival to General Smuts, is commendable, in its way.

Smuts has a good right to wear the only officially recognised Army beard, not only in virtue of his distinction but because he has worn it ever since he fought the British so skilfully in South Africa, galloping the veldt on a pony and wearing also a top hat and trousers tucked up to the knee. His only fibrous rival in World War I, Major Augustus John, King of Chelsea and Official Artist to the Forces, also had a right to flaunt that glowing Titian confection which made brasshats sick on the roadside. On recovery, Corps at once took it out of Division, who took it out of Brigade, and so it happened that some unfortunate sentry in "rest" billets found himself next day in clink for six months for a straggling bootlace.

Whether a totally bearded Army would inspire more terror in the enemy the War Office even now can't decide, we learn. The high-pitched nervous giggles and hysteria and other fear-phenomena of the Brains Trust are no guide. Those boys would carry on like little mad things even if Slogger Joad paraded with a sweet smooth pink face, Cambridge psychologists reported recently after experiments on rats.

Melody

"FLASH IZZY" BERNFIELD and a Mr. Sunshine (? né Sonnenschein), slung recently into the cooler for five and two years respectively for big-scale Black Market operations, strike the most plangent note so far in that swelling tone-poem of melodious names—how tuneless our home-

lier Island criminals' monickers ring in comparison—which is making the police-court records sound like an echo from *The Blessed Damozel* :

. . . whose names
Are such sweet symphonies :
Rubsky, Grabovitch, Bungwasser,
Schweinkopf and Vögelweiss.

A keen musician has suggested to us already that Walton, Bax, or Vaughan Williams ought to orchestrate the weekly Black Market conviction-lists. Maybe Flash Izzy deserves a full-scale tone-poem to himself on the lines of Elgar's *Falstaff*, jaunty and rollicking in spots but full of masterly psychological penetration, noble beauty, and—when the dicks ultimately put the old finger on him—pathos. The more lively revue boys seem to be missing their chance ; in World War I there was a simple, pleasing item in one of the shows showing a group of prosperous guttural patriots rising to sing "Gott Safe Oldt Englandt," full of pep and zing and enjoying every minute of the war. That's what revue is for, unless we err lously.

There's no need, however, to be rude, as the Parisian columnists and revue boys were when an exotic gentleman named Schrameck and resembling a tapir bobbed up from nowhere into one of the more fantastic Third Republic Cabinets a few years ago and tried, unsuccessfully, to prohibit the annual national procession in honour of St. Joan of Arc. Him they exhibited and described as a wart-hog, among other things ; also featuring his photograph, rather cruelly. The M.C.C. would never permit that sort of thing here, and rightly.

Tease

A PART from his beard, which is one of those vexing ones (a kind of Gielgud No. 5), the American poet Ezra Pound—known as "America's Haw-Haw" since he recently began broadcasting pro-Axis stuff from Rome to the United States—is one of those portentous enigmas who may be either God's greatest gift to civilisation or just a curious whiffing noise through a lamp-glass. We often wish we knew.

Mallarmé gave your Great-Aunt Genevieve the same trouble in the 1880's, and of course the sixteenth century Spaniard Gongora was the father of all wilful poetic teases. Faced with a Pound offering such as :

Fish-scales over groin-muscles,
lynx-purr amid sea . . .
And of a later year,
pale in the wine-red algæ,
If you will lean over the rock,
the coral face under wave-tinge,
Rose-paleness under water-shift

—we often long to ask his Bloomsbury fans what the devil Pound means. They wouldn't know, most probably. And whenever we catch ourselves thinking hopefully that maybe the poet himself knows, anyhow, that pensive nursery verse of Oliver Herford's about the goose-girl reading Schopenhauer to her flock comes stealing back to us :

How pat-i-ent-ly the geese at-tend !
 But do they re-all-y com-pre-hend
 What Scho-pen-hau-er's driving at ?
 Oh, not at all ! But what of that ?
 Nei-ther do I. Nei-ther does she.
 And (for that mat-ter) nor does he.

One consolation is that if the boys did or could explain, it might be a damn sight worse for everybody.

Mix-up

THAT Mozart was plastered when he passed the libretto of *The Magic Flute*, revived at Cambridge the other day, is so probable that serious musicians won't even take the trouble to argue it, we find.

We've never found anybody to whom the plot of *The Magic Flute* makes sense. It starts as a fairy comedy and ends as a sort of Masonic allegory, going cuckoo somewhere in the middle. Not that opera plots matter to any extent, but it certainly helps to have a broad idea of what is going on. When that tenor in one of Puccini's operas melodiously offers a baritone a whisky and soda you know you are being presented with a raw slice of Life, and even the stalls wake up and dream. When Senta in *The Flying Dutchman* leaps into the sea, that is generally all right with the average audience too ; they've seen it at Brighton and Paris-Plage, and maybe pushed a few unhappy girls off rocks themselves. Something simple and concrete for the mind to fasten on, like the rape of Brünnhilde—that's what opera plots need.

Our old fellow-hack "Beachcomber's" recent idea of bringing a rousing ballet into the more dull or obscure operas and letting the two sides fight it out is a good one. A smart kick on the nose from some red-blooded ballerina would do that bore Lohengrin a bit of good, for a start.

Organist

COMPLAINING mildly of an eminent organist recently, a music critic described him as "proud," which is true of most organists, who are devils for pride and take delight in pulling out the "swell-to-great" stop and shaking your very marrow with menace and doom.

Only two eminent organists, so far as we know, escape this charge. Sir Richard Terry, to whom the music world owes the recovery of those superb Masses of the English Tudor School by Tye, Taverner, *et al.*, was a delightful companion, full of jests and constantly trolling sea-chanties, on which he was also an authority. And as for César Franck, one-time organist of Ste. Clotilde in the Faubourg-St. Germain, he was admittedly one of the most modest, underpaid, and lovely characters who ever lived. Musing in that tall nineteenth-century Gothic church, where the fashionables go, we have felt the air full of Franck's heavenly harmonies. Any passage of his music invariably recalls to us now a coloured stone statue of Ste. Clotilde, Queen of the Franks, in her fifth-century flaxen tresses, and a vision of the great Foch *en civil* striding down the nave, gripping

his umbrella like a sword. Not all music has such agreeable by-product associations, and least of all Mr. ———'s (name deleted by Censor).

What makes organists stiff-necked and difficult is probably the vogue of the cinema organ, last odious degradation of a noble instrument, whose maudlin throbings have been perfectly described by Graham Greene as "the world's wet mouth lamenting over Life." Maybe they'd feel better about it if their seats went up and down like a lift, in a vulgar blaze of electric fairy lamps.

Spirit

THAT woman's voice saying "Oh, dear !" which broke into a Regional programme the other night was explained by an anxious announcer as a technical hitch due to crossed lines. It was, of course, nothing of the sort. Our spies at Broadcasting House report as follows :

1. It is the Voice of the Island Race, complaining meekly not only of this or that B.B.C. item, but the whole box of tricks ;

2. It belongs actually to the ghost of a Mrs. Hargreaves, murdered by a Talks don in 1935 ;

3. In Douce Aunt Ogilvie's time it used to drift in and sit for hours on his knee for comfort, whimpering ; rather embarrassing, but typically Barrie ;

4. It must not be confused with the ghost of the sailor Spike Mullins, which rolls round Broadcasting House hoarsely accusing the B.B.C. of spreading scurvy and Yellow Jack, and terrifying the more willowy and mauve-jumpered inmates to death.

On meeting Mrs. Hargreaves's mild ghost in the corridors, our spies add, the B.B.C. boys bend gracefully back and sideways, like daffodils in the wind, pirouette twice, blow a kiss and hasten to resume their entrancing duties.

Gaffe

A RECENT performance in Russian of *She Stoops to Conquer* at Kuibyshev has led a Russian critic to stress "the similarity of outlook and mutual understanding" between Russians and British, which maybe shows that Russian dramatic critics like our own boys are apt to talk at large through their fur caps.

Simple, chunky fun in both countries apart (compare *Dead Souls*, or *The Inspector-General*), our point is that Slogger Goldsmith's rather lengthy joke—from which the citizenry kept away in large numbers, we noticed, when it was revived recently at the Kingsway—is about a chap who mistakes a gentleman's country house for an inn ; a laughable error most chaps and most playwrights (and most gentlemen) would put right in about five minutes. It went over big in eighteenth-century London we guess, because the eighteenth century was drunk and could do that sort of thing.

If the Russians really believe the British still go blundering into strange country houses at all hours and stamping round and gaily ordering this

and that, somebody surely ought to tell 'em about the hellish difficulties of getting into the modern English inn, for a start.

Cliché

OBVIOUSLY the type of dumbo who would deliberately drag the Frankenstein cliché into a speech is the type of dumbo who can't ever get it right. Twice in three weeks some dumbo in the Commons has described Whitehall bureaucracy as "a veritable Frankenstein."

Seeing that nobody for generations has read, or wants to read, the Regency shocker by Mrs. Shelley in which a chap named Frankenstein creates a monster, is destroyed by it, and is fated to be mixed up with his murderous robot in the dull minds of politicians and other *hommes de salive* till the end of Time, it is queer how the Frankenstein crack survives. Mrs. Radcliffe and "Monk" Lewis and other best-sellers of the period equally made a packet out of ghosts, ghouls, vampires, werewolves, and supernatural thick-ear stuff generally. Only Mrs. Shelley's monster is remembered (and wrongly).

Which reminds us that when authorities in the booksy racket say the horror-novel ceased to attract long ago, they always forget *The Forsyte Saga*, that perfect Brocken-dance of cold-blooded ghouls which Goya should have illustrated. Could you imagine a richer feast of macabre shudders, except maybe a County cricketer's honeymoon?

Oatmeal

A DIETICIAN crying recently for more oatmeal for the British populace in place of bread knew better, we were glad to see, than to inspire any hope in the Island Race that oatmeal would make it the equal of the Scottish nation.

Oatmeal, which makes the Scots hardier and nobler, taller and brainier and stronger and purer and more beautiful and hairier and more efficient, with thicker eyebrows and larger hats, than any other race on earth, as they admit themselves, has no moral effect on the Island Race whatsoever. Dr. Johnson well knew this but dared not confess it. The aborigines of his native Staffordshire, who have lived on oatcakes for centuries, are dull-eyed, bandy, peering, vague, comatose, and feebly boastful, and brush the ground with their hands. Arnold Bennett's effort to represent them as bustling hard-headed fellows was an attempt to stampede the Scots into admitting human equality which properly failed. The Staffordshire custom of eating their oatcakes soft instead of hard, *à l'écossaise*, is sufficient to damn those sissies anyway. You ask to see the fine manuscript Gospels of St. Chad in Lichfield Cathedral, and they fob you off with a facsimile. This is typical and shows that an oatmeal diet has no toughening or uplifting effect south of Berwick.

An old playgoer tells us the first and last attempt to impose oatmeal on the Race by force was made at the opening night of *The Garden of Allah*, when the high-power fans blowing the "sand" in the big sand-

storm scene did their work so thoroughly that the first few rows of stalls were smothered in this improving Scottish food.

It did them no good, one need scarcely add. Outwardly stiff, calm, cold, and proud, inwardly as weak and sinful and pitiable as ever behind those glossy shirt-fronts and diamond chest-protectors, they dispersed into the night at curtain-fall, waking up James ("Boss") Agate on their way.

Tribute

IN the process of aryanising the works of the German masters the Nazis are turning the libretto of *Judas Maccabæus* into a piece called *Mongolensturm* (Mongol-Fury), *The Times* reports. Butcher Cumberland has rarely received a prettier compliment.

Handel composed *Judas Maccabæus*, you remember, specially to celebrate the victory of Culloden by this cruel, fat, red Hanoverian lout and true precursor of Nazidom, whom some vile sneaking Whig or other was recently trying to whitewash—may the Maulebec truss all such. To connect Cumberland's exploits in any way with those of that great patriot-soldier the Maccabæus seems so fantastic that our conclusion is that Papa Handel was plastered at the time; the only theory which fits a great many curious feats of the children of the Muses, incidentally.

Flattery of the Court is the less charitable explanation. We prefer to think of jolly old Handel, with his periwig over one eye, dashing down the notes and laughing himself sick. No doubt when the hangover arrived he was a trifle conscience-smitten at glorifying the Butcher, but his publisher probably said cheerily at luncheon, "Let it ride, boy, it's a smash-hit, let it ride," and ordered another bottle of the best, which, as Handel thought luncheon was on his publisher—a very common illusion in the Arts—cheered him up again.

Sweet

LIKE Chinese tea and Scotch whisky, the best Turkish Delight doesn't travel. Those who know the corner-shop of Hadji Baba in Istanbul will therefore not grieve unduly, we guess, over the present shortage of those sticky floury cubes of toothache the Turks export in tins for the delight of Harley and Wimpole Streets.

Hadji Baba, whose fathers supplied the Old Seraglio, still makes the real stuff, we gather from H. V. Morton's fascinating *Middle East*; huge slabs and mountains of it firm and fresh from the oven, delicately perfumed and tinted, discreetly studded with pistachio and walnut, melting on the tongue, incomparably cloying and delicious. In Greece, next door, you used to get a very toothsome and sick-making roseleaf jam, but you—we, at least—didn't get the imperial confection the Hadji makes, once gorged to excess by the vast moon-faced beauties and the dwarfs and eunuchs of the Grand Serail, the Topkapu Saray, and the glittering Byzantine Court before them (from which one concludes that the Basileus and his Empress, in their stiff jewel-encrusted vestments of silver and cloth-of-gold, also bulged and waddled).

The curious fact that fatness and jolly, mild benevolence always go together has often charmed us. The names of such stout parties as Abdul the Damned, Nero, Henry VIII., "Butcher" Cumberland, Basil II., Luther, Ivan the Terrible, Gibbon, and Goering occur to one naturally in this connection.

Snook

WHEN Oriane, Duchesse de Guermantes, gave her evening parties in the 1900's, for which the bluest blood of the Faubourg-St. Germain scrambled to get a card, the principal refreshment served was orangeade. Patrician *morgue* and absolute power enabled that sweetheart to treat the most exclusive society in Europe thus, in the days when Russian Grand Dukes on the razzle would chuck vintage champagne and liqueur brandy by the bucketful over fluffy ladies in Maxim's, for fun. A superb snook by the Duchess, we've often thought.

Why no modern leader of Society, combining economy with chic, has yet begun boldly to imitate Oriane de Guermantes we can't understand (and how like you to point out that somebody has, long ago, but naturally we wouldn't know). Cocktails are getting fouler and fouler and even Labour leaders are complaining. Sherry suburban grocers would blush for is being inflicted on palates which a year ago rejected with cries anything but a fine solera or the driest of manzanillas, and orangeade even out of a bottle would be no worse than some of the vermouth we've come across lately. You may say that orangeade, though launched by a duchess, would be the death of the average modern party, which may be true, and mightn't be a bad idea, either. Friends wouldn't dislike each other so much if they didn't meet so often at cocktail parties. Ring up Myra and say Dusty is screaming that he won't go to the Faugh-aughtons' again unless somebody puts everybody's head in a haybag.

Racket

A RICH reek of whisky and tartuffery having surrounded General Gordon's name since Lytton Strachey took him in hand, it was agreeable to read a *Times* letter praising this great soldier on the fifty-seventh anniversary of his heroic death at Khartoum.

Whether Gordon ever hit the bottle as Strachey affirms we can't say, never having examined sources. Probably not—but how picturesque! Old Testament in one hand, decanter in the other—how amusing, how rhythmic, how chic! And how it inspired the booksy rabble immediately to cash in on debunking every other great figure in history, digging feverishly in the refuse heaps of Grub Street and being very, very careful not to check their evidence! However, they've faded out now.

Poor little Lucrezia Borgia, most slandered of blondes, had to wait nearly 400 years before a scientific historian like Funck-Bretano probed the case and found her biographers had been handing on the tales of hired anti-Borgia pamphleteers. Mary Queen of Scots, for whom, as Dr. Johnson said, any decent man would be glad to die, was cleared only about

forty years ago. The booksy racket badly needs the attentions of the L.C.C. Sanitary and Public Health Department, we've often thought. Ring WATERloo 5000 and ask for Dusty.

Divettina

LIKE the political big shot of the 1880's who "forgot Goschen"—a mysterious formula or crack which used to send our grandfathers into fits of laughter over their *Morning Post*, for some reason—we forgot Lily Pons, an opera fan reminds us, when we were discussing the big girls of the operatic racket the other day. Fancy forgetting little Lily Pons!

How this exquisite elfin creature, who could hide in Peter Pan's thimble, ever became a diva of grand opera is a perpetual enigma to us. Robert Benchley's theory about Dorothy Parker a few years ago seems a clue—namely, that Mrs. Parker was once quite a large girl, but the late world war caused her to shrink to her present pocket-size. Maybe La Pons started as the usual 20-stone Brünnhilde, stamping round and raising hell, and something suddenly happened. Perhaps she got into the White Rabbit's house and ate a slice of that cake marked "Eat me"? Perhaps Tinker Bell mischiefed her in spite while sipping a cocktail of butterflies' tears in Wendy's hidey-hut? Anyway, there she is, a delicious humming bird among a pack of ramping ostriches, and it's a marvel she's never been trampled to death on the stage, *pauvrete*.

If La Pons ever took to Wagner she could perch on the average Wotan's finger. Think out the graceful implications of this, but don't write to us, write to Ernest Newman or somebody. _

Gipsy

NEVER having seen and heard the great Calvé, recently deceased, sing *Carmen*, which she created, we could only judge from the photographs that she was a *Carmen* on a buxom, good-natured scale, whereas Prosper Mérimée's Andalusian gipsy is *petite*, slim, vivacious, and wicked as you might expect.

We loved *Carmen* dearly till we grew up and began to listen to Spanish music, which no non-Spaniard can ever reproduce. (Compare the habanera in *Carmen* with the habanera in De Falla's *El Amor Brujo* and you'll agree, unless you are drunk and in bellicose mood.) Ravel got nearer to Spain than anybody, perhaps, in that delicious *L'Heure Espagnole*, and he did it, unless we err, without a single castanet; a remarkable feat. But once you've heard the malagueña sung in Spain by a Spaniard—an experience not so much of music as of fire, as Mr. Belloc has accurately noted—all imitations seem lifeless.

As to the prevalence of massive operatic *Carmens*, nothing can be done about it we gather. Only outside girls can sing opera, as Verdi discovered on the first night of *Traviata*, when the consumptive Violetta nearly broke the bed, causing great fun and laughter, and made the evening a complete flop. Wagner was right, therefore, to specialise in

German mythology, or the Big Girl's Half-Holiday, known also in hockey circles as the *rêve de Roedean*.

Blonde

ONCE more we must beg dear Fanny Burney (whose Diary is so delightful) to rap a gossip-boy gently on the noggin with her fan for going into hysterics again about the Wonderful Modern Girl, *stupor mundi*. This time it's some socialite blonde or other who speaks French like a native, apparently. The boy didn't say a native of what.

In the 1770's Fanny Burney knew a Sophy Streatfield of dazzling beauty who could not only speak Classical Greek but could cry real tears any time anybody asked her to, a pleasing social accomplishment. And, says Fanny, when Miss Streatfield cried

" . . . she looked, indeed, extremely handsome, for her pretty face was not, like Chloe's, blubbered ; it was smooth and elegant, and neither her features nor complexion were at all ruffled ; nay, indeed, she was smiling all the time."

How many modern blondes can cry like that and speak Greek, or hang by their toes, or grin through a hoop, or kick off gentlemen's hats, or do handsprings, or play the Jew's harp, or move their ears, or crack nuts with their toes, or perform any other trick leading to a successful Mayfair marriage? On the other hand, may blondes not be right to be completely dumb? With all her beauty and accomplishments, La Streatfield, after flirting with Thrane and being engaged to a clergyman, died an old maid. Maybe it was a judgment (said Uncle Cheeriboy laughingly, flicking a little snuff off his surtout) on that baby.

Wrench

WHILE Mistinguett, with Maurice Chevalier, is packing 'em in at the Casino de Paris and collaborating with the Boche like billy-ho, our own little actresses are heroically giving up their Press-cuttings for the wastepaper drive, according to well-informed sources.

Self-sacrifice on this scale needs no comment, as our old colleague and preceptor, James ("Boss") Agate, whose lightest critical word has caused so many little actresses to swoon in ecstasy or die in despair, would admit. And what is more, the kindly old despot would probably shed tears. A humanitarian through and through, the Boss has never been known to strike these tiny, warm, fluffy, tremulous, adoring creatures with his riding-crop as they fawn round him at parties ; he merely shoves them aside with one foot, quite gently. "Uncle" Sarcey, most famous of Parisian critics, used to terrify them into nervous prostration by imitating a lion. George Jean Nathan is said absently to pick out the most toothsome ones and eat them, talking meanwhile in a rasping voice of something else. *Autres critiques, autres mœurs.*

Tears would flow from the Boss, we predict confidently ; tears for the agony of the small, tender, weak, and unprotected, not for the loss of his

own superfine prose by pulping. The Boss has a duplicate of that for next year's volume as usual, our spies report.

Songbird

OBITUARIES of the widow of F. E. Weatherly, K.C., who wrote the words of "Roses of Picardy," "Friend o' Mine," "Thora," "Boys of the Old Brigade," and about 500 other popular ballads, seemed to indicate that the Fleet Street boys think these offerings are a thing of the fragrant past. They should use their radios more, whatever the cost. Nearly every munition-factory concert gives them the lie.

Weatherly is not everybody's tea, but he never—correct us if stinkingly wrong—fell into the error, common to the usual Victorian ballad-lyricist, of making the contemporary high-collared tenor with hair parted in the middle assert at the top of his lungs that Almighty God his Maker had personally chosen and guaranteed for him the maiden he was celebrating; an error so fantastic, considered theologically, socially, and æsthetically, that one wonders whether even the Victorians invariably swallowed it.

Which reminds us of an argument we sometimes had with E. V. Lucas over an incredible poem in his anthology "The Open Road" called "The Wander-Lovers," in which a Mr. Hovey claims *inter alia* that a girl friend named Marna is a daughter of the air, moving in the measures trod by the angels before God, just as much at home in Spain as in Tangier or Touraine, striving ever for some goal past the blunder-god's control. Our deduction was that Marna was obviously an egg-faced, ladylike number from Surbiton addicted to lockets, maidenhair fern, sensible tweeds, Cook's tours, croquet, blushing, lace collarettes, "Warblings at Eve," woollen underwear, Tennyson, Dainty Farmhouse Teas, refined squeals, and painting flowers on glass.

Sometimes Lucas agreed, sometimes denied it, and sometimes he drew an even more devastating portrait of Mr. Hovey's Marna, quite unfit for publication. Which only shows something or other.

Tonic

SUFFERING being good for poets and improving their style, as was amply proved ages before Lesbia broke the heart of Catullus, it is clear that those Bloomsbury songbirds who fled to America to find a formula for Life and save their skins and are now faced with conscription will, at some future date, if alive, produce better verse than heretofore, which isn't saying much anyway.

This advantage has not yet been emphasised by the sterile prigs and guffins who admire them, we observe. Yet how obvious! Had Verlaine never been slung in the cooler for shooting at Rimbaud we should never have had *Sagesse*; had Shakespeare never been bitterly fooled by Mr. W. H. and the Dark Lady, had Baudelaire and Byron and Keats and Poe never suffered—but why go on? It's the rosy, comfortable, well-found boys with balances at Barclay's who produce *Idylls of the King*.

Some good poets don't suffer half enough to write really blazing,

immortal verse, for which reason we are having a good poet we know introduced to a beautiful fiend who will trample on his heart and laugh him to scorn. If this fails we are having him blackmailed and sold up, to begin with. Not only will Posterity bless our forgotten name, but his publisher has promised us a rake-off, for a start.

Tribe

ONE of the Nature experts reports that tinkers and mumpers and their doxies have practically vanished from the roads. Stow you, queer cuffin! Bing awast to Romeville, gentry cove! Pipe the swadder with the strolling-mort under the ruffmans! In other words, we think the Nature boy may be right.

We manfully studied the canting language, hedge-Latin or pedlar's French, in preparation for an attempt, valiant but vain, to struggle with *Finnigan's Wake*, James Joyce's last opus, which knocked the booksy racket sockeroo *en bloc* with its fearsome jargon, part tinker, part Dublin underworld, part pure Joycese. But where are the mumpers and tinkers? When Dekker compiled his *Canter's Dictionarie*, temp. James I, the English roads were swarming with fierce, hairy rufflers, mumpers, hookers, priggers, swadders, paillards, Mad Toms, Abraham Men, whipjacks, curtals, and swigmen, with their strolling-morts, kinchin-coves, doxies, dells, and bawdybaskets. Dekker was greatly shocked by their goings-on; they seem to have been like savage Tartar tribesmen terrorising the countryside and even the citizens of Romeville (London to you).

The mumpers had songs of war, such as the one beginning "The Ruffin cly the nab of the Harmanbeck!" ("The Devil claw the Constable's head!"), and of love, e.g.:

White thy fambles, red thy gan,
And thy quarrons dainty is.

(Fambles, hands; gan, mouth; quarrons or quarromes, body.) The language has scarcely altered, experts say. But compulsory school cricket stopped this un-English conduct, the mumpers have gone, and we must be getting along to some more seemly topic.

Weed

ALWAYS interested, kindly but objectively, in women, their markings, song, habits, customs, prevention, and cure, we deem one of the gossip-boys to have stepped off with the wrong foot recently when he forecast that the continued cigarette-shortage will probably introduce smart women to pipes, or cigars before long, for the first time.

The fast Early Victorian sweetheart (*cf.* Mr. Sponge's friend Lady Scattercash, *née* the lovely Miss Spangles, of the Theatre Royal, Sadler's Wells) invariably smoked scented cigars, like George Sand. As for pipes, expensive West End tobacconists were trying hard to make smart women take to dainty briars, jewelled and otherwise, in the early 1920's, for some reason; well we remember all the flafia and bataclan from the gossip-

boys' chorus about "my lady's pipe," and how my lady passed this elegant fiddle-faddle up cold ; a considerable surprise to all when you think of the incredible things women will do at tradesmen's orders.

The first cigarettes smoked by women in this country seem to have been of a cheap popular brand, judging by Tennyson's well-known lyric which we have quoted before, and will, please Heaven, again :

Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here at the gate alone,
And the scent of the Woodbine is wafted abroad,
But you'll darned well smoke your own.

Thanking you one and all for your kind attention.

Actress

FOR including "a little West End actress preening and ogling in a silver cage" among the exhibits in that Ideal Museum we mentioned the other week, we have been denounced by a Naval chap who threatens to set our Dumb Friends' League on to us.

This kind of woolly sentimentalism, unworthy of the sea, derives from the poet Blake, from whose *Auguries of Innocence* we extract the well-known lines :

A little Actress in a Cage
Puts all Heaven in a rage,
It is by far a better rag
To put her in a Gladstone-Bag.

We used to know a soft-hearted chap who always took a few Gladstone bags to parties where little actresses were expected. When the lambent, big-eyed winsomeness and artless prattle of some delicious tiny sweet-heart became quite unendurable, he would seize her, pack her quickly into a bag, run outside, call a taxi, and direct the driver to deliver the bag at the Buckingham Gate flat of A. G. Macdonell, our late regretted friend and colleague. When Macdonell came home, he invariably released the dainty creatures, fed them, let them flutter round a bit, trilling and cooing, then yawned and let them fly away. Keeping little actresses in cages or aviaries, we admit, seemed cruelty to both these tender hearts, and they often denounced rich stockbrokers in Surrey for doing so. Our own feeling is that caged actresses earn their keep by doing their tricks, such as swinging by the toes, and, if in song, they can sing. In a Gladstone bag their talents are wasted.

That's our position, clear and practical, and we don't need any soppy hearts-of-oak with chests all over flags and anchors, not to speak of pink-gin stains, to tell us the rights and wrongs of it.

Doubt

REMEMBERING Tennyson's brief but poignant denunciation of the Bulgarian Atrocities of the 1880's (which moved Mr. Gladstone also to Jovian thunderings) :

How beastly vulgar
To be a Bulgar !

—one could hardly help lifting a sceptical eyebrow at Auntie *Times's* recent assertion that under the Gestapo the restive Bulgars are experiencing a reign of terror "unparalleled in the darkest periods of Bulgaria's dramatic history."

The fact being that, although the Byzantine Emperor Basil II ("Bulgarslayer") knocked them temporarily bowlegged, the toughest and hairiest boys in the Balkans, true to their Hun-Tartar origins, having won high marks at the old Balkan sports of ravagery and massacre for about a thousand years, off and on, and being second only to the Turks, can both dish it out and take it. Chaps who fought them in World War I report that, like the muleteers in the song, they blow their noses on the rocks and pick their teeth with rusty spears, so hardy are those sons of witches. Bullets bounce off their hides. We shouldn't think any sissy slaps from the Gestapo affected them much.

It may be that Auntie was thinking of the second principal Bulgar national industry, which is growing and distilling roses to make attar; a fragrant, spinsterly occupation which has led Auntie no doubt into believing that the Bulgars wear grey silk gowns and knit for the poor.

Apropos Tennyson, so many citizens are apt nowadays to confuse the eminent poet with his grandson, the eminent cricketer, or so a reader recently assured us, that we feel it our duty to point out that Alfred Lord Tennyson's only connection with the game, as it is often called, is the well-known song in *Maud* announcing to the eager girl that a well-known Sussex batsman has just left the pavilion, that the coast is clear, and that the speaker is waiting for her by the Members' Entrance with the dough:

Come into the garden, Maud,
For the straight bat, Knight, has flown,
Come into the garden, Maud,
I am here with the "gate," alone.

Just one more example of the way in which cricket is riddled with stinking graft.

Statue

RATHER scoldingly, one of the papers reports that a number of Parisian public statues are being pulled down. We doubt if the more cultivated citizens of Paris give a hoot.

Fewer really ignoble pieces of statuary defile Paris than London, but the Parisians have some queer old bits as well, for the most part raised by the Third Republic to its more eminent political grafters, such as Gambetta, who figures in a pleasing group of marble and gilt in the Carrousel, frock-coated, apotheosized, and wafted by angels of the Grand Orient to his appointed place. On the other hand, Paris has more and better statues to poets than we have—how that modest but graceful Shakespeare near St. Augustin puts the scrubby confection in Leicester Square to shame!—and if it's the statue of François Coppée we're thinking of, the poet's bronze cigarette is a poem in itself. The Third Republic incidentally put up a few of its statues by way of studied insult, for example the Renan at Tréguier, which most people expected the

devout Bretons to blow up long ago. However, the Bretons blew up Anne of Brittany instead, showing how excessive nationalism confuses the issues and warps the judgment.

The most amusing Parisian statues, in our unfortunate view, are (a) the tiny Napoleon topping that vast pillar of the Place Vendôme, which has inspired much ribald verse; and (b) the monument in the Avenue des Ternes to the balloonist Montgolfier, or somebody, which looks from a little distance like the Fifth Form at Roedean at basket-ball. In London, with the exception of Lesueur's Charles I, they all make you laugh except those which make you sick, and there is one, near Trafalgar Square, which has both effects, simultaneously.

Revolt

LISTENING to a chap giving tongue over the air recently on the subject of careers for the young in the post-war world, if any, we thought of Mrs. Browning's wild outburst at a party when Browning said musingly he'd like the child to be a literary critic if he could get him on a good publisher's payroll:

Book critics' lives (shouted Mrs. Browning)
• Are brutish and short,
To beat their wives
Is their only sport,
A life of error
'Mid thugs and sharks
Is passed in terror
Of publishers' narks,
Of P.E.N. Club hags
With icy breath,
Of blows, of gags,
And a shameful death,
Their vile employ
Is parasitic,
I won't let my boy
Be a booksy critic.

A deathly silence ensued, after which the *Times* Books Editor said tactfully to Matthew Arnold: "Been to any good shows lately, old man?" and the incident dropped.

Sissy

A GREAT fuss and fiddle-faddle about the Stamina of the Modern Girl, wonder of the ages, having been made by one of the gossip-boys, apropos a couple of Waafs on leave who had a chilly afternoon dip at Brighton or somewhere the other day, we take leave to quote from Fanny Burney's Brighton diary, 1782:

Wednesday, November 20.—Mrs. Thrale and the three Miss Thrales and myself all arose at 6 o'clock in the morning; and by the "pale blink of the moon" we went to the sea-side, where we had bespoke the bathing-women to

be ready for us, and into the ocean we plunged. It was cold, but pleasant. We then returned home and dressed by candle-light, and as soon as we could get Dr. Johnson ready we set out upon our journey in a coach and a chaise, and arrived in Argyl Street at dinner-time.

Brighton to London, about six hours. Just a poor little eighteenth-century sissy, all vapours and swoons.

Fracas

THE sensational theory—developed by us in a paper which sent the Royal Society crazy with excitement and fear in 1934—that Dr. Watson, Sherlock Holmes's stooge, was consistently drunk is still too much, we observe, for the delicacy of Auntie *Times* who referred the other day to "some indiscreet remark" by Watson on the subject of the sinister Moriarty, and shrank as usual from the plain deduction.

That Watson was permanently plastered after six months of snubbing and bullying from Holmes is a theory so obvious that only one critic, M. Tagueule, has ever seriously challenged it (see the *Revue de la Criminologie*, June 1935, CXLI, 95-126), and he was probably plastered too. Craven fear of Holmes kept Watson's drunken fury and misery under control, or he would have knocked his oppressor for a row of paper Japanese ashcans. Watson was a born yes-man of the kind you find in Fleet Street and the City. Alone in the sitting-room at Baker Street he would rage to and fro giving Holmes the works and inventing situations such as:

"Not a very good suggestion, Watson."

"You go to hell."

"What's that?"

"Aw go cut yourself a slice of jugular vein, you big beezele."

"WATSON!"

"Put 'em up, you big ugly dope."

Left hook to jaw, right to solar plexus, crash, crash, and out. Henceforth Watson, poor old downtrodden, cake-eating Watson, the fall guy, is master, and Holmes has to take it. Holmes then enters the room and Watson shrinks into the corner. Just a well-known trauma, as we told the Royal Society. We have it ourselves about editors, now and again.

Experience

OUR note the other day about a poor friend who is haunted by the Brontë Sisters riding a tandem bicycle moves a sympathetic reader to ask if (a) we've ever been haunted ourselves, and (b) if we know a certified-true ghost story.

As to (a), no, barring a brief period in 1925-6 when Gengis Khan used to snuggle up nightly when we went to bed, yellow, pockmarked, hideous, with flat Kalmuck features, like Lenin, and angry red slits of eyes. As to (b), yes, a famous case. A stout red-faced businessman reading the *Financial Times* was travelling in a railway carriage of which the only other occupant was a mild little elderly clergyman opposite, looking

out of the window. Suddenly the clergyman leaned over and said courteously, "Excuse me, sir, but do you believe in ghosts?" to which the business man replied, scowling and snorting, "Certainly not, sir. Snff! Stuff and nonsense! Ghosts! Prff!" "Well, sir," said the clergyman mildly, "I *am* one," and vanished. This naturally did not impress the City thug, a practical man, who merely snorted, shrugged, and returned with an oath to the *Financial Times*.

There's not much point in your piping up that you've heard this before, because the sequel has never been told, namely, that this very clergyman is shyly peeking at us at this very moment from over the top of a tall antique Spanish-leather screen. It isn't him we mind, it's the horse behind the baby grand.

Kindergarten

NO lover of simple, naïve, warm, furry, harmless things, such as baby rabbits, newborn robins, and little actresses, would ever want to scold the B.B.C. Brains Trust boys for their artless gambols, but we can't help feeling they overdid that engaging *simpliste* stuff slightly the other day, when one of the ace brains—was it Slogger Joad?—announced that the Middle Ages held as an article of faith that a given number of angels could dance on the point of a needle.

As every grown-up knows, that needle was merely one handy, fanciful illustration out of 1,876,543 in Scholastic Logic, used to assess the relation of spirits to space, and no more an article of faith than a wooden egg. We suspect the Brains Trust boys deem the Middle Ages to be abject fools and themselves to be the final flower of Civilisation, pearls of the ages, and the noblest work of God; which is extremely laughable—we'd like to lock them in a room for a few hours with Aquinas, or Duns Scotus, or even Abelard—and lets them off a lot of reading, obviously. That stuffed owl, Thinker by name, which joined the Brains Trust recently must have bust its pants with cynical hilarity at this Fourth Form interlude.

The newest rumour about the Brains Trust is that it causes scurvy, and our spies report that the B.B.C. sick-bay or lazaret is crammed with victims in mauve and primrose jumpers, all over spots and lumps, sick with misery and starvation, delirious, ragged, neglected, and raving. A stout lady who gave her name as "Miss F. Nightingale" visited them recently, hit each patient on the scone with a small ivory hammer, and left whistling a tune. What sort of womanly pity is this?

Frustration

MIZZLING round (like Mr. Sponge) to the Leicester Galleries, we looked in vain round the current exhibition of Victorian Art for a single representative Landseer, and retired with oaths.

To treat the greatest Victorian portraitist thus seems to us deplorable. Nobody has ever interpreted the Island Pan in all its mournful beauty and dumb nobility, snorting defiance at pursuers, more forcibly than the

painter of George Eliot at bay, sometimes called "The Monarch of the Glen." Nobody has ever painted the Race's doggie soulmates and spiritual directors with such apocalyptic, El Grecoesque vision. That huge, dignified, mournful-eyed Newfoundland licking the sweet old lady in "Down, Ponto, Down!" claimed by Ruskin to represent Cobden bidding farewell to a Manchester Liberal nightclub queen, is a finer canvas to us than Rosa Bonheur's over-praised portrait group of the M.C.C., sometimes called "The Horse Fair," showing the behinds of British cricket notabilities in restive mood.

London seemed swarming with typical Landseer subjects as we stepped out into Green Street, the air full of neighings and snorts and wuffle-wuffles. Repeating the disillusioned lines of Wordsworth (surnamed "Hippokephalos") on the subject of Lucy's features in later years:

She was a Phantom of Delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
Now, for her portrait, I can't fancy a
Better all-round man than Landseer,

we went our disappointed way.

Recital

ONLY some sixty years after the Symbolists, an American scientist has discovered that the effect on the palate of certain liquors bears a marked resemblance to that of music impinging on the ear.

Des Esseintes went much further in the 1880's and assembled, quite seriously, a liqueur-orchestra. Curaçoa, he found, corresponds exactly in its velvety, slightly sourish tone to the clarinet, Kümmel to the oboe, crème-de-menthe to the flute, kirsch, gin, and liqueur whisky to the brass, and raki and mastic to the drums and cymbals. He then created a string-quartet of old brandy (violin), rum (viola), Vespetro ('cello) and pure, old bitter (bass viol), and discovered further that relations of sound exist equally in the scale of liqueurs, Benedictine, for example, being the minor of the major chord which is green Chartreuse. With this knowledge and with skilful blending he composed a lot of liqueur chamber-music and played it to himself on his palate; a fascinating game, but nothing is said about the hangover.

This kind of research always comes (or came, alas) from France. Rimbaud's discovery that every vowel has a distinct colour once seemed to us so vital that we mentioned it to a big red business man who merely asked sneeringly where it got you. The vermilion lout was right. It gets you nowhere, like all poetry.

Crack

WHY Auntie *Times* thought it would hearten us (and America?) a few days ago if she reprinted Livingstone's celebrated bromide on being discovered by Stanley (Nov. 10, 1871) we can't conceive. "Americans and Englishmen," boomed Livingstone, still shaking hands, "are the

same people. We speak the same language and have the same ideas." To which Stanley, the American special correspondent, surprisingly replied, not "Aw go climb a tree," but "Just so, Doctor."

Well, we must remember perhaps on behalf of millions of justly infuriated Americans and Englishmen that Stanley was not himself. Weary, dusty, dirty, unshaven, bitten by flies, covered with prickly heat, and dying for a snifter off the ice, he had that moment tottered into Livingstone's camp after weeks of forced marching through the Bush. White, dazed, swaying slightly, fiddling with his topee, he was probably all in and ready to cry even before the Doctor handed him this one straight off the bat.

Apart from being a journalist, Stanley was not a very winsome character, it is recorded, but one can pity him. "J-j-just so, Doctor," he says weakly, giving in, and—can't you see him?—flops in tears, thinking of the faces of his owner Gordon-Bennett and a few more big boys of that intensely Anglophobe period when they hear this one back home.

It's easy to find excuses for Stanley, but what about Auntie *Times*, the tactless, overbearing, beaky, bombazine-gowned, managing old dope? Just as we were getting on so chummily with America, too! Somebody should dump Auntie in New York and leave her there alone for a week; a perfect cure for any of the Island Race who believe that Livingstone crack. But does anybody? Even the Pilgrims, once dinner is over?

Snoop

ACCORDING to a gossip-boy authority, women are drinking much less since the war began (or much more, we forget which). This relates only to performances in West End restaurants and cocktail-bars, for we don't suppose the boy followed them all home.

Fine ladies have not been snooped at in this connection, to any extent, since the early eighteenth century, when all the moralists and satirists were raising a loud whoobub about their addiction to nips of ratafia, citron-water, and other alcoholic cordials at all hours, from the quick one on awaking to the final nightcap. Ratafia, unless we err, was something like Kirschwasser, on an almond or fruit-kernel base. Citron-water was aquavitæ with lemon, unless we rave. Both tended to redden the dainty nose and expand the graceful shape, but as paint covered the one and hoops the other it didn't much matter to girls of spirit.

Served in richly cut shallow glass on a silver salver with the day's TATLER by a grinning little black page named Cæsar or Pompey, ratafia was sovereign for the matutinal vapours and megrims, but as the day wore on it seems to have produced serious hiccups, also pimples. On the other hand it certainly made girls enjoy the TATLER, we can't help conjecturing wistfully.

The fruit-base of these Augustan cordials no doubt saved smart women from the dismal fate of the Bright Young People of the roaring 1920's, who, as you remember, succumbed utterly to gin and sank without trace, whooping pathetically with their final breath and rattling their feverish, emaciated frames like something out of Holbein's Dance of

Death. What a warning against excess of gin ; or maybe against excess of Bright Young People.

Sadismus

FADING out the first performance of the Walton Violin Concerto the other day eight bars before the end, so that some flubdub or other following it could start on the tick, is such a typical B.B.C. trick that we were mildly surprised to find a furious music-lover writing from Balliol to Auntie *Times* about it.

Anybody who has ever listened to the shrill babble of the B.B.C. boys in the Bolivar Bar or other drinking-pools is aware that sadism is their ruling motive. When by chance they have something good to offer the intelligent, nothing gives them a sharper ecstasy of delight than to cut it off abruptly, for they are a State monopoly and they know it. In the old blood-and-iron days when Broadcasting House was run by generals and admirals and grim Aberdeen engineers they were frequently flogged to death for this. Under Douce Aunt Ogilvie's gentler régime they get away with it because, a chap in close touch tells us, the fairies intercede.

Nobody can think much of the fairies for this, but this chap says a terrible wee auld softhearted boglewife from Kirriemuir drives them on, crying, "Puir mitherless bairns !" and "Losh sakes, ye gomerals, ye ken fine the laddies hae naeboddy on this airth but oorsels an' Ogilvie !" The fairies then peek glumly into the inner sanctum, pop inside, and half an hour later a kind figure with tears in its eyes and a tiny wonderful ache in its heart rings for the Master-at-Arms and says Mrs. Cosy Comfort or Mrs. Dickery Dock says lay off the skelping forbye and gie everyone of those puir sinfu' laddies a thimble (or kiss). And that, chicks, is why your Uncle Crusty is so frequently ill after hastily switching off.

Canadian

FRIGID, distant blue eyes, a holy terror of being spoken to, a sidelong, awkward, panicky sheering-off movement, as of a startled crab—the old, old embarrassing Island story. A young Canadian officer in the South told it to us again last week, asking plaintively what the hell is biting the heirs of Drake and Nelson. Fortunately we could tell him.

Free, white, and twenty-five, he abandoned, like so many others—has it ever struck you that the only nations who entered this war for strictly idealist motives are Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa ?—one of the liberal professions in 1939 and became a volunteer, and like so many other Dominion soldiers he still can't understand why the Island Race keeps him at arm's-length so carefully, even when overcharging. Being a Canadian, and French-Canadian at that, he was able to understand quickly when we explained that compulsory school cricket is at the root of it. Having been cut off from the mainstream of European life and civilisation for the past 400 years, the Race has been so further fossilised and incornifustibulated (we pointed out) by the ethic of the

Straight Bat and all the rest of the tralala that to-day it hardly dare speak to anybody for fear of losing caste.

Canadians, being by God's grace free from birth from this quaint tomfoolery and having no opinion of cricket to speak of, except that it is an ass-game, naturally prefer being billeted in Scotland, where the natives lack these inhibitions.

We were careful to add in defence that the Race is just the same freezing old bundle at home. "Then nobody speaks to anybody?" asked this Canadian. "Nobody speaks to anybody," we said, "without a proper introduction by somebody decent." "I thought possibly a lot of 'em were just dead," he said. We hadn't the heart to assure the bronzed, warm-hearted, pathetic lad that he had unwittingly stumbled on a great primal truth.

Merrie

THAT romantic old whimsypuss who wants (vide Press) to re-start the old-time Harvest Home junketings on the land evidently doesn't know his Island peasantry very well.

Down our way, a few years ago, we watched with great interest a group or gaggle of very kind and earnest ladies and gentlemen all over bells and posies from Bloomsbury, or somewhere, hopping indefatigably round in jigs and Morris dances, chanting fragrant rustic choruses like "Lumps O' Muck" and "Rumbelow's Hey," and rather pointedly indulging in general merrie-merrie. After an hour of it most of us left to go to the pictures in the next village and the rest had to hurry home to switch on to Zoops Zeizler and his Voodoo Vikings. What the ladies and gentlemen from Lunnon were doing was very nice but seemed to have no bearing on anything much, like the sermons of the last Vicar but one; whereas the alternating maudlin and paranoiac frenzies and bloodlust of B.B.C. jazzbands industriously rehashing the Voodoo noises of Broadway intoxicate the rural mind as valerian does cats, and you should hear our radios spraying the quiet countryside every Sunday morning.

In our unfortunate view this is a resurgence in another form of that addiction to black magic which began in Jacobean days and only died out in the countryside a couple of generations ago. We don't attend midnight séances at the village wise-woman's cottage any more, and no black cocks are sacrificed to the Powers of Darkness with cabalistic formulas, but we get almost the same kick out of negroid swamp-music. (The Middle Ages had a name for it but of course they're dead.) What do you take us hayseeds for—a lot of hem ornary ole-fashion dumble-dores, mubbe?

Ghost

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY, according to one of the gossip-boys, has left off haunting the Queen Anne house in Maple Street, Soho, occupied by Mr. Harry Jonas, the portrait painter, since bombs fell near by. It seems a pity.

No more kindly, cosy, rosy, bespectacled, endearing ghost than Thackeray could be met on any midnight staircase, in our unfortunate view. A bit of a snob, perhaps (when he wrote *The Book of Snobs*, you recollect, "snob" signified "cad"), but you could get him to twinkle and beam round the house any night, no doubt, by getting a duchess to drop in. Dickens, who once lived at the same address, would be far more temperamental and difficult unless maybe you filled the house at nights with dear little gay winsome actresses, which nobody sane would ever want to do.

But it must be charming to be haunted by Thackeray, and nobody would appreciate it more than a chap we know who is haunted day and night by the three Brontë sisters riding a tandem roadster, one of whom—Charlotte, generally—strikes at him repeatedly with a bicycle-pump.

The Psychical Research Society never investigate cases like this, preferring to waste their time on poltergeists romping round haunted rectories and whatnot. They'd get more results from the evidence of a poor devil who has to duck low in his bath every morning at 7.45 when the Brontë girls pedal in through the locked door, frustration stamped on every feature, and cycle laboriously round the bathmat till Charlotte signals okay for action and lets drive. They never speak, he says. Emily, wrapped in hopeless gloom, gives a sort of despairing grunt when Charlotte misses. Anne, on the back saddle, just stares and keeps glumly free-wheeling. After three swipes or so they pedal slowly out and wait for him in the street. An interesting case of vindictive persecution, due, our friend thinks, to his having torn off the golden wig of a big best-selling booksy girl who was gnawing at his calf like a tigress during a P.E.N. Club guest-night scrimmage or literary free-for-all some time ago.

Whimsy

HAVING an impression, derived from an after-dinner speech some time ago by Lord (then Sir J.) Reith, that Aberdeen and other engineers, despite their nerve-racking appearance, are devils for gay, innocent whimsy, we find this confirmed by a very roguey-poguey newspaper "display" ad, indeed, issued by an eminent firm of engineering tool-makers, the big romps. (It'll be a maypole in Victoria Street next.)

This matter affects us intimately. A powerful film-magnate once asked us to suggest some dainty romantic relief for a superfilm about George ("Rocket") Stephenson. "The angle," said the magnate, "is it's like this, see, say you take a tender, well that's a part of a loco engine, see, well, there's maybe a good crack in that, *tender*, see, *love-angle*, maybe he's nuts on some girl or sumpting." Our own angle was even more delicately whimsy, we recollect, involving love-dreams whispered by George Stephenson to the Rocket while getting up steam, and a lot of incidental byplay with a sweet tiptoe lassie of eighteen named Leebie McQumphie, who had the terrible Barrie trick of going elfin at a moment's notice, for example:

STEPHENSON: This is a poppet-valve.

LEEbie: Dear poppet-valve.

(*Butts him gently in the stomach with her head.*)

STEPHENSON: And here is the connecting-rod.

LEEBIE: Naughty, naughty connecting-rod.

(*Peeps laughingly over her shoulder, gesturing to the fairies to chide the connecting-rod.*)

You will readily understand that before long our angle turned out to be that Stephenson was giving this frightful girl a great healing sock with a spanner and emigrating next day to Ecuador, which the magnate said was a lousy angle. The draft scenario was then scrapped for a side-splitting comedy film in which everybody got debagged.

. . . But you won't tell us Henry Bessemer never curtsied to his Blast-Furnace when he thought nobody was looking.

Liebestraum

"CRAZY, inefficient, and unpunctual," remarked Lord Monkswell harshly in the House of Lords the other day, speaking of—whatever do you think?—the British Railway System, *en bloc*.

On the other hand, remember, British railways continue to breed pure Arab locomotives whose plastic beauty often causes the impressionable to heave a sigh. Need we remind you of the French Symbolist who fell passionately in love with two new engines of the Chemins de Fer du Nord? Listen:

"One, the Crampton, an adorable shrill-voiced blonde, long, slim, imprisoned in a dazzling brazen corset, with the supple, nervous stretch of a cat; a golden sparkling blonde, whose extraordinary grace is terrifying when, contracting her muscles of steel, she sets in motion the immense rose-windows of her delicate driving-wheels and glides off, full of life, at the head of expresses and fish-trains.

"The other, the Engerth, a dark monumental brunette with a low, hoarse cry, her sturdy flanks clamped in an iron cuirass, a monstrous animal with a tousled mane of black smoke and six low coupled wheels; what overwhelming power when, making the earth tremble under her, she trails, heavily and slowly, her massive train of goods!"

That's how true engine-lovers like Des Esseintes went on in the 1900's, when locomotives wore tight waists and high toques and trailing skirts. Faced with the more ravishing models of 1941 like the Flying Scot, or Sir Erisypelas, or even Repton (Schools Class), that Symbolist would pass out on the platform in an ecstasy.

Next time British railways, having raised fares yet again, drive you hopping mad with that pose of a public benefactor nobly forgiving stinking ingratitude, gaze into the liquid, coal-rimmed, wildly jealous orbs of your engine-driver and beg his permission to stroke the heaving flanks of Beauty (but make sure he lays down that big ugly spanner first).

Knock

TRILLS of admiring congratulation and ecstasy burst from one of the gossip-boys who saw a wealthy headline beauty in a smart restaurant recently exposing her bare knees in war-economy stockings, with deathless courage and stoic calm.

Tennyson's lines from *A Dream of Fair Women* will at once occur to the thoughtful :

"Rich women's knees
Are sweet curiosities,
Their anfractuosities
Startle and please"—
Thus in a valley
The shepherd-boy's song,
And naturally
The lad was wrong,
The hayseed erred,
The young chawbacon
Was too absurd,
And quite mistaken ;
The knobbliest trees
Are more delightful :
Rich women's knees
Are *simply frightful*.

On the other hand (to be quite fair) Yeats has remarked, in praise probably of some Old Rodean-and-All-England Rugby half seen stamping by :

She might, so noble from head
To great shapely knees,
The long flowing line, etc., etc.

So one hardly knows what to think, even if, as a sahib, one cared to think about women's knees at all.

Aubade

HAVING brilliantly reconstructed the other night the tense atmosphere of the Parnell Commission enquiry (1888) and that dramatic finale of the forged Parnell letters sold by the revolting Pigott to the *Times*, the B.B.C. boys must needs go and spoil the whole thing, for us, by a little domestic scene in which Parnell and Mrs. O'Shea addressed each other with almost every breath as "My king" and "My queen." The time was breakfast time.

Now we know as well as you do that these lovers constantly called each other by those rather terribly blush-making titles, and Mrs. O'Shea herself (a silly little thing) made an issue of it in print years afterwards. But if the illustrious Parnell and his Kitty ever did so the first thing in the morning they must have been made of more superhuman stuff than Abélard and Héloïse.

Women, Heaven knows, are tough enough for anything, but in our shrinking experience very few healthy chaps would be able to address a woman to her face as "My queen" until well after luncheon, and a pretty good luncheon at that. After dinner even a stockbroker can do it. But at breakfast—well, maybe it was such a habit with Parnell and La O'Shea that they went on in this way quite mechanically.

They should have stayed a week-end or two with a host we know who used regularly to come down to breakfast on Mondays late, pale, and distraught. Casting one look round the table, muttering, "My God, don't

the women look awful this morning!" and, shivering slightly, he would then take a long draught of orange-juice, after which he felt better and would compliment each of the fair with old-world vivacity and grace. No place for romantic byplay or flaffa here, egad. Marmalade, my king? Only from your white hands, my queen. Oh, I say, look! Everybody's passed out again!

Yawn

NOT even a world-war can wean the artistic camera boys, apparently, from the illusion that people like lashings of nudes. As Auntie *Times's* critic remarked with a stifled yawn of the recent London Salon of Photography show, there were a large number of studies of nudes, or, more correctly, "portraits without any clothes on." Yachts are more interesting to Auntie's boy any day, we guess; also to us.

Having at last grasped that Velasquez, Titian, Rubens, Manet, Ingres and Renoir have about exhausted public interest in well-nourished nudes, painters seem to be dropping the subject. Women are probably warier, also. We guess photographers employ an oblique and "rush" technique, making a great fuss over a Tudor baronial-hall background, palm or aspidistra in pot, rustic bridge, marble pillars, balustrade, and so forth. While the model is posing in her best costume amid these accessories, jingling her bracelets and smirking somewhat, the photographer says suddenly, "How would it be, Miss Gewither, if you took all your clothes off and held this art bowl of gold-fish between your toes?" "What, me?" says the model astonished. "Not likely!" "It's more artistic, like," says the cunning photographer. "Oh, you awful," says the model, blushing, "I'll tell my big brother that is a reserve half-back in the Harlequins on you!" The net result is a damaged eye and/or yet another nude exhibit on the walls of the Camera Club, where nudes are such a weariness that (as we have personally noted) even a lecture on the colour-photography of chrysanthemums comes as a blessed relief.

What the public likes are not nudes but newts, a Fellow of the Zoological Society once assured us.

Cavern

WHAT to do with Maxim's in the Rue Royale will be one of the many social problems of Paris after this war.

Every night, neutral correspondents report at intervals, the place is reserved for and crammed with rouged, tight-waisted, noisy officers of the German Staff and their odalisques, wolfing rich food and throwing back vintage champagne by the bucketful, cheek by jowl—or might one say "muzzle by chops"?—with some of Monsieur Laval's buddies and the brilliant and versatile Sacha Guitry, who lost no time in getting in on the ground floor. Maxim's is now a symbol of the conquering Boche at (almost) his most odious, and the fabric will have to be drastically purged, or abolished.

It was never a choice of the real Parisian. "Chez Maxim's" (*sic*) stood

for Gay Paree in sixteen European and other languages, and it was the spiritual home of the *rasta* on the spree. Even its name was a label. That Anglo-Saxon apostrophe "s" on which its first proprietor cashed in during a passing wave of anglomania in the 80's often made crabbed purists for the French tongue rather cross. (Compare such interesting later Montmartre developments as "Jazz's-Bar.") Prince Danilo's song in *The Merry Widow* probably scaled its fate for the thoughtful.

Chez Weber, higher up towards the Madeleine, was the midnight refuge before World War I of Marcel Proust, among other notables. A chap we know often used to watch the haggard and prickly Proust, huddled in his furs, a dying man, peeling a pear and looking round broodingly with big bright fawn-like eyes for somebody who looked as if he might be about to insult him. A challenge to a duel generally followed, Proust being a devil for fighting, unlike a few big fat healthy booksy boys we could mention. No names, no pack-drill.

Golf

GERMAN golfers may now stamp happily to the first tee, having been assured by the *Kölnische Zeitung* that "golf" is not English or even Scots, but a Dutch-Flemish word, *kolf*, meaning a club to strike balls with.

Looking up the cleanly and admirable Skeat—what menial service wouldn't we do for you, dogsbody that we are?—we find the *Kölnische Zeitung* is correct. More sinister is the discovery, on turning up "cricket" in the same authority, that it comes directly from the Old French *criquet*, the post aimed at in the ancient *jeu de boule*. Continental influences in the Game That Has Made Us, etc., etc., etc. ! No wonder the extensive devotional literature of cricket never mentions this.

Some months ago Osbert Sitwell declared in public that he played against Yorkshire at the age of seven, whereupon some abandoned scribbler dared to allege further that the Yorkshire XI at that period was half full of little French actresses named Toto and Zizi and Paquette and Mimi la Tigresse, not only playing but hanging round the pitch, ogling the umpires, and pressing voluptuous kisses on the cold lips of the solemn, noble horse-faces as they strode out in their pure white flannel armour and their little schoolboy caps. No official protests having been received from Yorkshire or the M.C.C., one must conclude this shameful story is true.

Gift

PROPOS elephants, exotic dumb chums seem to be in increasing fashion as gifts. The Chinese recently sent a giant panda to Mr. Roosevelt. Now the Free French have sent him a gorilla from French Equatorial Africa.

A rather embarrassing vogue, perhaps. When politicians and the great receive massive gold caskets, the gift of municipalities and generally of frightful design, they heave them into the lumber-room and turn to mightier things.

You can't do that with gorillas, or pandas, or even jaguars, as the poet realised (too late) after sending one of these pets to a smart hostess on her birthday, with the dainty lines :

All teeth and claws, behold this little jaguar !
A fit companion for the kind of hagar,

and we sometimes wondered idly what Josephine Baker did with that leopard, or whatever it was, she trailed for a time round Paris for the Press photographers' benefit, whether it clawed her friends much at parties, whether they'd rather be clawed to death or watch Josephine wiggle her torso and sing those songs, and so forth.

We were once in a large house crammed with stuffed bears, elk, tigers, caribou, cobras and things, mostly holding trays and all shot personally by the owner, or at least by the representative of the trapper who sold them to the agent of the dealer for the shipper who sold them to the wholesalers. The owner wanted to press a huge stuffed python on a sweet girl who was present, but her mother said no. We still think Mumsie was right.

Elephant

THAT elephant at the Sanger's Circus auction which trumpeted in scorn (vide Press) at an opening £10 bid, had the right idea, like the ray of sunshine which lights on the bride at Mayfair weddings. Nature *does* try, in spite of Whistler's criticism ; especially if any of the Fleet Street boys are present, we notice.

Elephants and Switzerland always seem to us among Nature's most successful attempts to play up to the Press. That naïvely over-coloured vista, like an act-drop, of Mont Blanc from the Lake of Geneva, for example, is perfect headline scenery, like that impossibly rosy *Alpenglüh* which, somebody once told us, is worked by a Schwabe-Hasait installation switched on and off by an old man in Berne Power Station.

Elephants, with their cunning, malicious little eyes, obviously delight in deceiving the hamfaced populace. If you remember the celebrated ballyhoo over Jumbo of the Zoo, idol of Victorian England, the emotional peak came when, amid the tears and cheers of a distracted nation, Jumbo, crossing the fatal gangplank to the liner for America, paused midway twice, trumpeted, and turned hastily back, refusing to part from his Island buddies. That was an idea of clever Mr. Barnum's and was worked by a hidden electrical gadget which stung Jumbo on his big flat feet ; and you won't tell us Jumbo didn't enjoy his share in this odious deception.

Elephants also love to romp with the film boys (*cf. Clive of India*). another suspicious sign. We regard them as Samuel Butler regarded dumb-bells—with suspicion, as being academic, not to say bogus.

Elder

THE case of Mr. Alfred Charles Arnold, cosmopolitan, traveller, and war correspondent, who died the other day claiming stoutly to be 112 years old and quoting a Bloomsbury parish-register birth-entry of

1829, is singular. He was a fit, tiny, dried-up, sprightly little man, fluent in five languages and of considerable charm, when we met him some ten years ago, and he described with vivacity street scenes at Queen Victoria's Coronation, when as a child of eight he was trampled on by the crowd. He then looked to us much younger than 102, and needed no spectacles. He did not boast about his age, but was modestly proud and claimed it quite seriously.

Had old Mr. Arnold been a ballet-dancer or a West End *jeune premier* or a Test cricketer, we thought the public would have flocked admiringly till yesteryear to see him perform, and he would have been given a whacking great silver teapot on his 100th birthday by the Race, which reveres the art of not dying almost as much as the Chinese, especially when the practitioner is in the entertainment racket.

(One current West End musical-comedy favourite at least ten years Arnold's junior is covered with adulation and applause every time he totters on and flings his aged limbs indefatigably round the stage.)

Old Mr. Arnold, who began his career by training for opera—maybe under Lulli, or even Purcell?—ought to have stuck to it, we thought.

Spell

IN Sweden, where time seems to hang heavy on chaps' hands, recent experiments claim to prove once more that cows are susceptible to music and give more milk under its influence; a theory first put forward when Orpheus was a boy.

Auntie *Times* went immediately so whimsy on this aged topic, rearing and bucking and plunging and cavorting and mooing, that you'd think Juno had turned the old trot into a frisky heifer herself. However, there is certainly something in Auntie's suggestion of cow-chamber orchestras. The kind, soft liquid eyes of cows would soothe and stimulate musicians accustomed to the cold glassy stare of the Island Race. The charming faces of cows, their gentle breathing, their silent, rhythmic chewing, their sweet immobility, would make them the ideal audience for anything from Bach to César Franck. A chap who used to lecture on English Poetry at Vassar and other women's colleges in the States once told us there is an excessively attractive Greuze-eyed type of American girl who creates the same immediate *sympathique* link.

Cow-chamber music would therefore not only increase the national milk-supply but improve the temper of musicians; edgy, difficult boys, most of them, apt to fly suddenly off the handle, brooding, jealous, and unkind. Oddly enough, pianists, even women pianists, are exempt, and the delicious Cécile, the *ange musicien*, in Duhamel's novel is by no means a rare type. They can always knock hell out of the keyboard, of course.

Sanctions

AUNTIE *Times*, remarking recently that in Italian opera-houses "the applause is almost as important as the high note for which it waits," either forgot or (the refined old haybag) ignored the equally interesting

corollary, namely that when an operatic star fluffs the note, the Italian audience gives him (or her) merry hell.

Arnold Bennett was charmed by this at the Scala, Milan, and we've detected it even in lovely, kindly Siena. Where the Island Race, easy-going, less critical, less familiar with the music, and always anxious to do the decent thing, applauds everything without discrimination, the Italians when annoyed by bad singing break into whistling and catcalls of an exquisite savagery, and sometimes chuck cushions. Our feeling is that they are right, on principle. The Race is apt to be over-docile, as one of Auntie's boys remarked when a patient herd at a recent Albert Hall muddle found there weren't reserved seats for it, and made no moan.

As the law stands, a chap assures us who has often resented West End theatrical attempts to spoil his evening, you can be ejected for hissing—as for brawling at Lord's, or in church—and an action may lie. However, there is an annihilating American custom of quietly getting up and leaving in a steady stream which baffles the torturers, they say.

Enigma

TOO many letters are being written by the Island Race, cried an anguished citizen to the *Daily Telegraph* the other day. If ten million people cut out one letter a day, he cried, it would save the Post Office from having to stagger round with 300 million letters a month.

The impartial observer will doubt, to begin with, if these letters are terribly interesting. Have you ever asked yourself frankly—we often have—what on earth the Race find to write to each other about so indefatigably? We once had a furious argument about this with an American thinker who held on general principles that the average British letter begins "*Dear Mother (Uncle, Babs, or Tiny),—My legs are as cold as marble from the feet up so I think I must be dead.*" We pointed out hotly to this sneering foreigner that his ignorance of the major spiritual preoccupations of the Race was appalling, and that the average British letter almost certainly begins (and maybe ends) with a recital of batting averages.

A Divorce Court lawyer incidentally told us once that when incriminating letters are read aloud in Court their most exciting emotional passages are always skipped, by an unwritten law; namely the passages in which some guilty, frantic British lover covers page after frenzied page with discussions of a late cut by Bradman or a tricky ball from Larwood.

Ache

A WHIMSY-WHAMSY gossip who suggests that stage people could save coupons and simultaneously brighten London's streets by borrowing Renaissance and mediæval dress from the theatre wardrobe forgot, we take it, that rich and beautiful dress went with the rich and vibrant ages, and *Vierge souveraine*! where are they?

A sweet little actress seen tripping along the Piccadilly of 1943 in the authentic garb of, say, Yseult of Brittany or Beatrice d'Este would make

us personally sombre, resentful, rather bitter, and inclined to nag, and perhaps to strike the chit ; for we hate to be reminded of beauty lost for ever, and any bright-eyed little mopsy flaunting Renaissance costume and trilling Shakespeare's music, such as :

Heel ! menneh-callah'd messnjah, that ne'ah
 Dast disobee the wafe ahv Jupitah,
 Who with thay seffrn weengs, apahn may flahs,
 Diffusest hanneh-drahps, refreshing shahs

—affects us with such exquisite, aching nostalgia that on the last occasion we opened a vein with our penknife and quietly bled to death in the stalls.

Too late. What would Richard II look like walking round modern London in his famous jacket thickly sewn with balas-rubies ? Or Charles the Rash of Burgundy in his battle-hat hung with rows of pear-shaped pearls and sapphires ? Or sweet Piers Gaveston in his jacinth-studded, damascened, red-gold dress-armour ? Or any of the big Elizabethan boys such as Raleigh, plastered with diamonds and pearls like a coster queen ? Pretty silly, says you. That's a fact, says we. Nothing like the good old heather-mixture reach-me-downs and a nice bowler, says you. That's true, Heaven help you, says we, rolling over with a stifled groan and shamming dead.

Smoke

PPIPE-SMOKERS are not as yet rallying with any marked enthusiasm round Sir Stephen Tallents, B.B.C., and his war-economy watercress-and-lavender experimental ersatz blends, which he admits are not "very palatable."

You may have noted that the best-selling booksy boys who have capitalised the large-sized briar so extensively—it shows the public they're bluff, manly, forthright, and honourable, a photographer explained to us—are hanging back rather ostentatiously. Maybe some of them, having sponsored various tobaccos for advertising purposes, are scared of the Tobacco Ring's bodyguards if they're caught backing the Tallents experiments. Or maybe, now booksy publicity has fallen off, they've dropped manipulating those pipes and taken to chewing, like Ibsen. Did you know Ibsen habitually chewed American plug ? A French critic some time ago dug up the odious fact, which for us explains all Ibsen's drama, just as the fat, rich Havanas Trollope habitually chain-smoked while working explain the works of Trollope. Old Daddy Ibsen, chewing and spitting through his whiskers and thinking up yet duller and snuffier dramatic situations—no wonder his lilyhanded admirers never mention it, the shy wild ducks.

Nobody has yet (apropos the Tallents scheme) suggested dried tea-leaves, on which most pipe-smokers begin at an intempestive age. Or horrible, lousy, fiery, leathery, yellow homegrown tobacco, such as chaps who grow it sometimes foist proudly on you. Or the nearly similar seats of old cane chairs, which Barrie's friend smoked, or said he did. Or Magaliesberg, the dark, dry, crumbly, linen-bagged Boer tobacco you dislike at first but by degrees grow to esteem, and which South Africa ought to export a bit more. Whatever the Tallents herb laboratory

ultimately digs up, the result could hardly perturb anybody who in the last war smoked Army ration tobacco, which tasted like the unwashed beards of very old damp enemies of God blended by epicene witches from Bloomsbury under a bloodshot moon (*la sangrienta luna*) on a wet February night outside a Liberal club in Manchester.

Echo

SUBALTERN after hard-up subaltern faces a court-martial on cheque charges, and more and more sergeants (as Mr. William Hickey of the *Express* remarked) stay in the ranks, where they're better off.

While the War Office is still "considering" paying junior Army officers a decent living wage, that item of 17s. 6d. for "hire of furniture" in a typical monthly mess-bill quoted by Mr. Hickey seems to us to strike a charming old-world note. It smacks, in our unfortunate view, of Buller's long baggage-trains in the Boer War, blocking communications with truckloads of rugs and carpets and plush hangings and mahogany tables and leather armchairs and Fortnum crates and grand pianofortes and cases of regimental plate and all the other essential campaign mess-furniture the Army lugged along to South Africa, unless survivors lie. The average officers' mess of 1942 would hardly have been deemed suitable for stabling by some of those Olympians, by all accounts. It was the last Monocle War, after all; we mean ornamentally and symbolically, as malicious Continental caricaturists of the period saw it, and how.

We've no grudge against the monocle as a necessary and practical engine of war, and we know a chap who runs an infantry brigade like clockwork with its help at this moment. But it seems in its romantic, symbolic, or Boer-War aspect to go naturally with that 17s. 6d.—which would almost buy the entire furniture of some Spartan messes—and the suspicion strikes us horribly that this may be the war, after all, for which the Warbox is still stealthily preparing. Up with those pom-poms, there! Where's that heliograph? Damme, they've put up wire, the unsportin' hounds! Play us a bit of Chopin, Colonel.

Prospect

DOUBTS about the restored England of our hopes have already been expressed in print by a dismal chap who predicts ominously that the urgency of new post-war housing may yet compel the shelving of those wide schemes for decent planning.

Bloody but unbowed, one merely wonders what the typical pastoral—we'd rather not think of the industrial—English village will look like *circa* 1950–55 if this wowser turns out to be right, God forbid. As it stands it's already a piquant comment on Progress, consisting of half a dozen successive period-exhibits:

1. A clot of mediæval or late-Tudor half-timbered cottages nestled round the church; craftsmanlike, harmonious, often beautiful, intensely individual;
2. Down the street, a few scattered specimens of rural Jacobean, August-

tan, and Georgian work in rosy mellow brick or tiled weather-boarding; proportioned, often dignified, simple, often graceful in the matter of windows and pilasters, strongly individual;

3. Further down, a uniform smear or terrace of 15 mean, hideous, drab boxes, *circa* 1887, generally called "Jubilee Villas" and without pleasure or profit to God or man;

4. Further still, stretching into the fields, a rash of shoddy, pretentious little shacks in three-ply and tin, all similar; the contribution of 1919-39, designed apparently by a drunk and vicious moneylender's niece in Hell.

What further degradations are in store for the countryside, let alone the towns, if honour is shelved, who can say? Ring up Whitehall 89889, Extension 76A, and warn Tiny to go easy on those contracts, because some of the boys will be laying for him.

Switch

TAKING a line from Soviet radio, the B.B.C. Foreign Broadcast Department is to "humanise" its staff for German consumption, it is announced. More "emotional" appeal is to be the thing, apparently. More "punch."

It won't be too easy for some of the B.B.C. boys, we dare surmise. Accustomed to preserve a high standard of rather frigid gentility, Grade 3A or South Kensington, they will especially wince, if we know anything about them, at the word "humanise," which has awful implications. Some of them still remember, with a light shudder, that brilliant broadcaster of the late Spanish war, General Queipo de Llano, whose technique endeared him so greatly to the Nationalist and especially to the Sevillian proletariat. The lower class Sevillian has a jovial gift of backchat and is extremely *comunicativo*, or free from reserve, like Sancho Panza, and Queipo de Llano knew exactly the stuff to give him, namely, racy, vigorous hitting and continuous sardonic fun (you probably recall his celebrated musings on the beauty of the wives of British Left Wing clergymen, some of whom were enjoying a conducted tour round Barcelona). The General was as good as an Army Corps to the Nationalist cause, and Soviet radio still hasn't caught up with him in the "humanised" line.

So many of the B.B.C. boys seem to have swallowed a poker in their infancy that it may assist them to remember that Lord Curzon himself once unbent sufficiently to enquire "What is a *bay-ah-no*?", meaning "beano," and the explanation didn't unduly scandalise him.

Quartet

FEW best-selling booksy boys dare swear, hand on heart, that they have never written a line which might redden the cheek of innocence. That eminent literary figure, the late Charles Pendlebury, could do so at the age of 87 with absolute truth.

Of Mr. Pendlebury, one-time senior mathematics master at St. Paul's, Auntie *Times* observed in her recent obituary notice that his name was familiar to generations of schoolboys, and his famous *Arithmetic for*

Schools had been translated even into Burmese. It has always seemed odd to us that the lives of ostentatious industry and virtue led by his principal quartet of characters A, B, C, and D have never stung some indignant Bloomsbury thinker into producing a rival arithmetic book more consonant with Marx, Freud, Krafft-Ebing, and advanced modern thought. Specimen elementary problem :

A can dig a square yard in $5\frac{1}{2}$ minutes, which is half as fast as *B* and one and a half times as fast as *C* and *D* together, and is being blackmailed by *C*, a noted diabolist. Halfway through the digging of a piece of ground 15' by 45', *B* elopes with one of the "wives" of *A*; *C*, who is under the influence of hashish, leaves to attend a Voodoo séance at a local co-educational prep. school; and *D*, a disguised Communist Party official, denounces *A* as a bourgeois for his views on the ownership of the means of production. Having murdered *D* within the next half-hour, how much work will *A* have done before (a) he is arrested by the hirelings of the Capitalist State, or (b) the comrade-members of his own "cell" get him?

There is a footnote discussing the complex sex-life of *A*, evidently a *vraie tête de cocu*.

Very different is the decent Muse of Pendlebury, whose work can be placed in every hand, like its great best-seller predecessor, Cocker's Arithmetic, which (you remember) Dr. Samuel Johnson presented to a shy Highland nymph during his Hebridean tour. This gift amused the Doctor's friends considerably until he explained, knitting those terrible brows, that Cocker happened to be the only book he had with him.

And what more improving gift for a nice girl than Pendlebury, equally? Though you never know; his book may itself have turned out by now to have Freudian angles. You can hardly look a buttercup in the face nowadays without a snigger from Bloomsbury.

Visionary

WIPING the helpless tears from our rheumy old eyes as the last nervous hiccup and giggle of the B.B.C. Brains Trust boys, or Huxley's Hoplités, died away the other day—it's the first really comic show Broadcasting House has yet put on, don't you think?—we decided their cross-talk act is funnier than all the astrologers, being more richly priggish, portentous, and omniscient. All the astrologers, that is, bar one.

There seems to be something to Michel Nostredame (Nostradamus) whose prophecies one of the more intelligent weeklies has been re-examining with cool detachment. A chap who, writing in the 1550's and in verse, can foretell among other things such facts as the French Revolution, the Napoleonic Wars, World War I, the rise of Hitler, World War II, the conquest of Europe, and the collapse of France, with such minor details as the bombing of Tours and Naples thrown in, is something different from the ruck of those vague, timid, bumbling, oh-so-careful little buddies of the stars who twitter in Fleet Street, you'll admit. Still to come apparently is a British landing in France, great battles on the Rhône and in the Jura, the ultimate rejection of Nazi paganism by the Germans, and—soon after 1961—the establishing of the administrative centre of the

British Empire outside England, which is what one or two ardent Imperialists have been demanding for some time.

Nostradamus doesn't say when the war will end, he awards no definite victory, and he predicts a lot more merry hell for Europe before the worst is over. Apart from those of St. Odile of Alsace, who was not an astrologer, his prophecies for our future seem the only ones with a ring of probability. If you're such a glutton for present punishment that you long to know what more is coming to you, despite the merciful veils of Providence, we should say Nostradamus is the lad for your money. Enquirers to "Auntie Zaza" at the British Museum on the subject may get an answer, or maybe a thick ear.

Bogey

ONE of the more skittish papers recently produced a strip of scowling photographs of the six leading German generals on the Eastern Front with the caption "Nice People, Aren't They?" They seemed to us far less unnerving than the faces you find in any Financial Supplement.

The German military pan normally assumes a ferocious aspect when photographed—ask your Great-Uncle Joe about Ludendorff's and the Kaiser's in World War I—but we doubt if those boys are invariably the same at home. (There's a high German general in Zweig's *Case of Sergeant Grisha*, incomparably the best novel of the last war, who is quite a dear old gentleman off parade, kind, beaming, and avuncular.) The strain of continuously keeping up a rigid steely scowl, as practised, among other vilenesses, in the Prussian military cadet schools, is humanly impossible except in extreme cases. Big business men and hens, on the other hand, never relax their brutal cruelty of expression in any circumstances, as any showgirl or poultry farmer will tell you.

Looking fierce at intervals is of course an international military tradition and is held to terrify the enemy, for which purpose we all had to grow moustaches in World War I. Far more frightening, actually, would be troops who used the bayonet with a pleasant smile, but one doesn't expect the War Office to go in for subtleties like that.

Dish

IF dining-cars are shortly withdrawn for the duration from British railways, as the *Daily Mail* predicts, what epicures will chiefly miss is our old friend the fish course, that slim oblong of *suprême de barbue*, *Chemise de Grandpère*, *sauce Colle*, which has made British railways celebrated the world over. Unchanging as the final *bombe* in French restaurant cars, this flaccid strip of brill tasting of old flannel nightshirts served with billstickers' paste has been the constant delight of gourmets even more than the *macédoine de fruits à la Botte en Fer Blanc* which traditionally ends the repast. Our information is that the G.W.R. chef, Hégésippe Taguele, invented brill, which is never seen off a railway, also the fruit course, cutting himself severely on the can during the process

and receiving the plaudits of the Travelling Wine and Food Society Committee of that period (*circa* 1870) with a gracious wave of a bandaged hand. A flushed and tiny member who shouted "Garbage!" was thrown off the train at Leeds, adds the aged epicure who gives us this information.

Brill, a mystery fish, is born and bred on trains, so far as we can discover. Somewhere at big rail centres like Euston and Crewe and York it spawns in huge special tanks on wheels, greeted and encouraged by fifty porters clashing milk-cans and a hundred guards blowing whistles. It is pale and oblong from birth, 2 inches by 4 inches, and if it has any flavour but that of flannel it dies.

Suspicion

BARGING manfully into the diet racket and fearless of assassination by Harley Street thugs, some scientist or other has discovered that wild-rose hips are a rich source of Vitamin C and should be on every British family menu.

This attempt to make the Island Race rose-minded sounds charming on the face of it, but may—a don warned us last week—equally be a dirty crack at the Race, cunningly disguised. If you remember the well-known case of one Lucius Apuleius, who was turned into a hairy ass by a witch in Thessaly some years ago, he was able to regain human shape after many unfortunate adventures only by eating roses offered him by a priest of Ceres.

Then my deforme and assie Face abated, and first the rugged haire of my body fell off, my thick skin waxed soft and tender, the hoves of my feet changed into toes . . . my long eares were made little, my great and stonie teeth waxed lesse, like the teeth of men (etc).

It isn't for the likes of us to probe a scientist's mind, even with blouse, mask, and gloves on, but it certainly looks at first sight as if the boy was playing us all up. Contrariwise, one must consider the loathly ignorance of scientists, who are not likely to have read one of the world's best adventure stories, and if they did would probably dismiss it as untrue. Yet only a few months ago a well-known Test and County cricketer suddenly regained human shape after eating a spoonful of roseleaf jam—that delicious confection you used to be able to get in tins from a Greek grocer in Soho—and has refused his nosebag ever since, to the great wonderment and joy of his relatives, who were sick of tossing him carrots and lumps of sugar. See *The Lancet* for October 15th, 1940, "Auntie Joy's" gossip-page, next to the French pictures.

Film

ONCE more the Navy has shown the brasshats and bureaucrats of Whitehall and Bloomsbury the way to do it. The official story of the E-boat attack on Malta was nearly as brilliantly incisive and vigorous as the Bismarck story, which is tops so far.

Don't look round yet, but we imagine the writer of the Bismarck piece, Commander Kenneth Edwards, R.N., of the submarine service, formerly

Naval Correspondent of the *Sunday Times*, historian of the Invergordon mutiny—remember it?—and now king-pin of the Admiralty's Press bureau, may be not entirely regretting a plunge he took into the film-jungle in our company some time ago. Whatever may be said about that underworld and its fantastic fauna it certainly braces, in a dizzy way; like living on pink gins to jazz music. It also deprives one permanently of the faculty of wonder or surprise. Having at first been brought up—as who isn't?—all standing, with his bobstay nearly carried away, Commander Edwards got the hang of everything with remarkable speed and efficiency and wouldn't raise an eyebrow now, we guess, if Admiralty wireless reported that La Garbo had eloped in a Navy bomber with the Dalai Lama and was spraying Berchtesgaden with explosive liqueur chocolates.

Fortunately the Commander mingled during his escapade with reasonable human beings, as the film boys go, and never trod the mazes of the Larger Lunacy like another naval bloke we knew in the racket who used to cry pitifully whenever he saw a beaming clergyman, who reminded him of *Punch*, which reminded him of fun, which reminded him of British film-farce, which brought before his desperate mind's eye an endless procession of frightfully jolly chaps, either debagged already or about to be. He is now enjoying a rest-cure in the chops of the Channel.

Gaffer

BEHIND that heart-warming demand of Norfolk farm workers for extra beef and beer for the harvesting, and none of your damned vitamin-pills and kickshaws, we can't help seeing the lean, bronzed, somewhat menacing figure of our old buddy Henry ("Tarka the Otter") Williamson, the only Nature authority we know who ever had the guts to relinquish pen for hayfork and tackle Mother Nature single-handed down on the farm (for G. S. ["Farmer's Glory"] Street was a farmer before he started writing those agreeable books).

Gaffer Williamson, whose manful struggles with the Norfolk loam have been recently described by himself, was always one of the few Nature boys who (a) never got their stuff off the backs of cigarette-cards, and (b) never put a painfully high-class style across the public like the chap in Evelyn Waugh's lovely satire *Scoop* ("*Featherfooted through the plashy fen passes the questing vole . . .*").

So far as we know the Gaffer's friendship with Lawrence of Arabia—with whom he was due to lunch on the day of Lawrence's fatal motor-bike smash, incidentally making the last entry in Lawrence's diary—has never affected his prose, which is good English Decorated, with a touch of the Baroque. On the other hand, if the local tribesmen wanted rousing we guess Gaffer Williamson would be just the sheik to handle and lead them.

A disturbing taste in cowboy flannel shirts is one of the Gaffer's means of self-expression, not only while actually engaged in tilling the soil but on his rare and slightly overbearing visits to Town. Our feeling is that this costume only embarrasses and confuses Mother Nature, who would vastly prefer in normal times to see Gaffer Williamson round town of a night in those immaculate evening clothes (as the gossip-boys say)

in which we have seen Gaffer Street before now at a smart literary crush. Remind us to ask "Mélisande" of the *Farmers' Weekly*.

Illusion

WHETHER the Anti-Bribery League, apart from the big-time stuff, has its eye on the gossip-boys and critics we've often wondered. Rich women and novelists are constantly trying to corrupt these. Every time we see a critic in a luncheon-time huddle with a best-seller at the Savoley we feel sick. No money may be actually passing, but when we glimpse the critic toying with his brandy and nodding and smiling and saying smoothly yes, yes, assuredly, of course, I agree, oh, but certainly, oh, absolutely, we know, with Slogger Maugham, that a thumping good half-column is on the way. Faugh! A booksy Machiavelli once tried to buy us with a luncheon, but honour stood firm. He found it cost him a lot more than that, egad.

The same applies to huge prima-donnas (compare the current vogue of Lily Pons, about knee-high to a Barrie elf), outsize leading ladies, Ministers for Co-ordination, Old Roedean international Rugby half-backs, and poor Marshal ("Fats") Goering, who for some time, if you remember, was regarded by the Race, on the word of the gossip-boys, as a Pretty Good Sort and even a Dashed Good Sportsman. Fickleness—pah!

This may be the long-sought clue to all those rows and splits among our dumb chums' champions which amaze and distress the populace, who do not understand. Alternatively some of the boys and girls may be natural born fighters who join the movement merely to study the back-lash technique of savage horses, the charging of angry bulls, the stab of the butcher-bird, and so forth? We wouldn't know.

Canute

MISS DOROTHY SAYERS publicly corrected a Fleet Street leader-writer the other day about King Canute. It was high time.

The nub of the Canute episode, as Miss Sayers pointed out, is not that Canute was a halfwit who tried to stop the rising tide, but that he was a wise man who exposed his flatterers and yes-men to ridicule, a "very proper and Christian thing to do." It would be nice to find Miss Sayers correcting a few more modern perversions of historical fact, and by the Great Horn Spoon of Rocamadour, Miss Sayers would have her work cut out. Official Whig folklore has sunk so deep for generations into the Island consciousness that to try to tell the Race the full honest truth about its more sacred idols, such as Elizabeth Tudor, Cromwell, William of Orange, Clive, and a few more is a task to appal the stoutest. No school history-book we have ever seen mentions for example that to please his mistress and her friend the Queen of Naples Nelson allowed a Neapolitan patriot to be shamefully executed; a quite appalling affair. It's our feeling that the darker aspects of the great should be as familiar to posterity as their nobler ones, on account of valuable moral lessons thus conveyed.

The Whigs who have cornered English history for so long (may they rot) have had a pretty good run; it will take about 257 years of hard labour to undo their work and even then the Race won't begin to try to believe the truth unless it's printed in very good clear type on superior paper. Ring up Opal and say you're a friend of Tiny's and somebody's trying to make Reggie read a book, but he'll be free for a round about 11.

Tipple

IF asked to place the national drinks of the Island Race in order of popularity we should say (1) patent medicines, (2) tea, (3) beer, sort of.

And if the Government thinks this new legislation requiring every patent medicine after 1941 to bear a label stating its true composition is going to put the populace off its favourite tipple, it is most likely in error. Millions every year are spent increasingly on the stuff, as a statistician recently revealed, and a string of incomprehensible words on the label will, we guess, merely add to the flavour, especially of those quack products which pack a nice cocktail kick. A very old boulevardier who remembered the powerful acting of Charles Warner in *Drink*, adapted from Zola's *L'Assommoir*, once told us that it so appalled and fascinated an aged relative of his, herself permanently dozey and cockeyed with patent medicines of a dozen kinds, her principal hobby, that she went to see it night after night and considered it a great moral tract.

Whether secret patent-medicine orgies ever take place he couldn't say. Maybe all that stealthy rustling of black silk and those high-pitched coughs you hear when passing boarding-houses in Kensington are a secret call to the Sabbat, who knows?

Fuel

FOLLOWING dark hints of a coal-shortage next winter, it seems surprising that the Whitehall boys have not yet issued a 16-page pamphlet recommending alternative fuels such as the cedar-logs beloved of high class novelists, which are only about five or ten guineas each, or maybe twenty.

In every rich, smart novel—correct us if wrong—there comes a moment when the fragrance of a cedar-log fire fills the twilit Adam drawing-room, gets up the nose of the passionate hero, already dozey with the subtle French perfume of Lady Angela, and makes him more slap-happy (see below) than before. This kind of fire has always smelt to us a bit decadent and Byzantine. A fire of salt-soaked, aged, oaken, tarry ship's timbers gathered on a stormy beach not only gives out a finer aroma but delights the eye with sparkles of blue and crimson. Beech-logs burn deliciously also and so do apple-logs, but damson-logs are our choice, their smoke being faintly sweet and never cloying, soothing and never enervating, entirely free from narcotic influences, and enabling the hero to stand up to Lady Angela, Serpent of Old Mayfair, like a man and possibly sock her one with a hairbrush.

Naturally peat is better than them all, if you can find it. Peat gets

you suddenly by the throat, like the beauty of Ireland, and enables you (a chap was telling us) to uncoil the falsest, most alluring siren with perfect nonchalance, roll her up, and toss her aside like a bit of old string.

Word

GINGERLY venturing into the underworld of American slang, like a maiden lady visiting a leper settlement with tickets for soup, Auntie *Times* seemed vaguely to surmise—unless we do her grievous wrong and herewith apologise—that Mr. Quentin Reynolds's recent reference to Goering as "Slap-Happy Hermann" had something to do with warding off flies and mosquitoes. If we're not odiously in error, "slap-happy" means the state of being a snowbird, or hophead; in other words, a dope-addict.

There are two things to do about American slang: one is to ignore it totally in a well-bred way, the other to find out what it means. The thing not to do is to make a rather patronising shot at it like Sir Samuel Hoare, who took "jitterbug" to mean a citizen with the wind up and launched the word into spurious circulation. Greatly admiring the swift, vivid, imaginative literary force of 90 per cent of current American slang, we feel this uncritical hauteur is unworthy of a cultivated mind. The same applies to flashing tropes like, for example, "That guy's so low he'd need a stepladder to kiss a rat." If that isn't sheer poetry, what is it?

Tzigane

ROLLING wild dark Romany eyes, clashing our gold earrings, baring our dazzling wolf-like teeth in a snarl of embarrassment, we learn from the papers that numbers of our gypsy brethren are being passed over as unfit by the Army calling-up authorities (though the fit ones, we happen to remember, often make first-class soldiers).

Bouncing George ("Aren't-I-Marvellous?") Borrow and his sparring partner Mr. Petulengro ought to be alive to shrug this one off. Romancer as Slogger Borrow was, we dare surmise he never dreamed our lithe, dark, free-striding brothers of the open road, the moon and stars, might find themselves turned down like puling Gorgios one day for pigeon-chest, hammer-toe, thrush, lumbago, thrombosis, and arterio-sclerosis. It certainly makes a fool of the Wind on the Heath, brother, and if all the gypsies of Europe could meet in congress this year, as usual, at Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer, we guess the British delegation would be looking somewhat shyly pensive.

In another sense Romany stock is soaring. You've probably heard the story, now being whispered everywhere by owlish citizens with faces like pumpkin-pie, of the gypsies who recently camped one night by permission in a field, then suddenly moved to another? Asked why, they said the original field would be bombed the next night, which duly happened. Impressed, the farmer asked if they could predict the end of the war. They said: "*Three months after your death,*" and (the story ends breathlessly) the farmer died last week.

Sceptical by nature, we've never been inclined to endow the Romany race with more than mediocre gifts of prophecy, having tested their powers more than once at the Derby. That aura of psychic Oriental mystery is, in our view—also that of Prosper Mérimée, who knew much more about the gypsies than Borrow—the bunk. We rank them as seers with some humble rustic oracle of Old Greece giving tongue at half-a-lepta the crack. Whether Professor Starkie, our leading modern authority, agrees we forget, being also blown if we'll look it up.

Salute

LORD ALFRED DOUGLAS'S sonnet in the *Daily Mail* to Winston Churchill, beginning "*Not that of old I loved you over-much,*" and ending with a deliberate echo of Addison's compliment in *The Campaign* to the other Marlborough—

Like your Sire,
You rode the whirlwind and out-stormed the storm,

was a pleasure from many aspects. It isn't every master-duellist who so gracefully salutes an old antagonist with the ever-bright rapier, it is by no means every distinguished poet who can show admiring magnanimity—most of the Muse's children are devils for keeping up a row—and it isn't often that a bit of happy frankness is discovered amid the bland flow of unmixt adulation which treacles from the daily Press.

For writing *The Campaign*, Addison, you remember, was rewarded with a cosy Government sinecure, for such was the pleasing custom in those days, when poets deserved it. Nanny has always given the cake to nicely behaved poets with smooth hair and clean ears, like Addison and Tennyson and Alfred Austin, and coldly ignored poets who fight and make facés, like Pope and Browning (whose bit of furious verse saying he'd like to spit in FitzGerald's eye probably cost him a peerage). How the old-fashioned language in the present Poet Laureate's earlier works was ever forgiven is a mystery to us. We expect somebody explained to the Government that Mr. Masfield used to go round with sailors. Sailors can get away with anything. Imagine a Wellington trying to put an Emma Hamilton across the scandalised Island Race.

"V"

INGENIOUS, we thought, that B.B.C. foreign broadcaster's little variation on a Beethoven theme the other night. He pointed out that every time the German soldier in Nazi-occupied countries hears—as he does increasingly—the familiar massive four-note opening of the Fifth Symphony played or hummed, he hears "V" in Morse—"short-short-short-long." The ominous significance to the German soldiery of the letter "V", cropping up in a hundred forms in the enslaved lands, despite the Gestapo, needs no embroidery.

Up to now the more whimsy music critics have been apt to refer to this theme as "*Fate-knocking-at-the-door,*" which is said to be

Beethoven's own crack, and means nothing whatsoever. Henceforth it might more sensibly be called the "V" theme, ranking as concrete symbolism not far behind Chopin's "Revolutionary" Prelude, which is the voice of Poland in arms against the brute invader in every age, Turk, Tsarist, Boche and Bolshevik alike.

And if the music critics had the imagination of a spavined owl in pince-nez, they'd long since have proclaimed that the glorious trumpet-call opening of Elgar's No. 2 ("Spirit of Delight") Symphony represents, in its sweep and majesty, the unsheathing of a greatsword for Christendom like Joyeuse, the Sword of Charlemagne in the *Song of Roland* (which you fellows probably know by heart, and we wish we did).

However one must be patient with the music critic boys, who have weak eyes and, after undertaking such imaginative flights as describing the opening of a hackneyed Rachmaninoff piece as somebody knocking at the lid of his coffin, or a hackneyed Beethoven piece as "the Moonlight Sonata"—probably because it has nothing to do with moonlight—are content to call it a day. Is Francis Toye in the house? We don't mean you, sir, we mean the small undernourished ones.

Posy

IF that citizen who has been writing to the papers demanding an anthology of Representative Empire Poetry (for some reason) gets his way, one trusts the compiler will not overlook that fine authentic ode by a Babu poet on the death of Queen Victoria which begins :

Dust to dust, and ashes to ashes,
Into the tomb the Great Queen dashes.

Call

FAINTLY priggish though they can't help being, those little didactic heart-to-heart dialogues in the National Savings Committee advertisements probably touch many a spendthrift proletarian heart. The experts responsible haven't worked round to the middle and upper classes yet, and it will be interesting to see how they handle a couple of Mayfair hostesses chatting over a cocktail and beginning, say :

Mrs. A. : I see Lord Henry's chucking his weight about a bit. I expect he's not used to all that money he makes in the Army.

Lady B. : The dirty dog, I said to him yesterday, "Suppose you cut out a few of those dinner-parties at the Savoy," I said, "and put a bit more into War Savings. Why," I said to him (etc., etc.).

The academic world again, is a rich untapped lode, as a chat between the Master of Belial and a virtuous philosophy don might show :

Don : Well, Master, I see our new Fellow's going the pace.

Master : Drunk again? How annoying.

Don : Dope, I believe.

Master : Why can't he save the dough he spends in those Chink joints and put it into (etc., etc.).

And so on. The point being that however fantastic such dialogues

were, they could never be so fantastic, or so humiliating, as those ads. showing members of H.M. Forces pleading with the populace to rally round like good sorts.

Jape

MR. HAROLD NICOLSON, M.P., whom our old fellow-hack "Beachcomber" wants boiled down to make syrup—a curious desire, persistent and very shrilly expressed—remarked in whimsy mood recently that Bradshaw's style expresses clarity, simplicity, and care: which is the first Bradshaw jape we've come across for some time.

Most people stopped making jokes about Bradshaw and his guide, so far as we can discover, in the decadent or Yellow Book period. The preceding Victorians otherwise took their railways glumly, despite the *Punch* boys or because of the *Punch* boys (or even *with* the *Punch* boys). By the 1900's one of the wild poets in Chesterton's *Man Who Was Thursday* was lifting Bradshaw to a higher philosophical plane as the historian of man's victory over Chaos. Later, Bradshaw formed Zuleika Dobson's library. Sporadic Bradshaw jests continued to crop up wistfully here and there till at length, about 1914, Time, the great healer, brought popped oblivion. Now Mr. Nicolson has started the business all over again and one hardly knows where to look.

The French, whose *Indicateur Chaix* is (or was, alas) five times as tall as Bradshaw, one twentieth as thick, and twice as abstruse, have never made fun of it to speak of, though on equally long-established, irritating complications, such as cuckoldry, their jokes are legion. Probably if such things ever happened in this country we'd think them funny too, though losing trains has, of course, a serious side as well.

Show-off

THAT relic of La Pompadour sold at Sotheby's the other day, a copy of Tasso bound in opulent French red morocco, gilt, with her arms—did she ever open it?—is characteristic. Like La Dubarry, that blowsy sweetheart had a profiteer's taste in bindings. Marie Antoinette's books in the same library at Versailles are very simply bound in calf, with a neat crown and initials. Thus is the patrician enabled to put the parvenue in her place (if she had one, as Lady Oxford remarked on a celebrated occasion).

Belonging to an age which guts mellow old calf volumes, beautifully tooled, to make cigarette-boxes, one probably has little right to heave a half-brick at La Pompadour, who didn't murder books. Moreover, a little discreet foppery over books you really care about is never out of place. Humbert Wolfe went in for white vellum, for example; it isn't our own tea, but it's decorative and does no harm, though Zaehnsdorf and other modern bookbinding artists could produce something better at the price, no doubt.

What really hurts is over-gilt morocco, and *grandes cocottes* and the very rich don't even stop there, unfortunately. We once saw a row of

books, belonging to a millionaire, bound in the Byzantine manner in ivory and brocaded velvet of various colours, all over whacking great jewels, probably real.

The Byzantines were a vulgar people, we conclude: too blatant, too dressy, too restless, too cruel, too hooked in the nose, too fond of noisy spectacles, too everything. We often think they'd have adored Brighton.

Brougham

AN attractive and well-bred way to solve the civilian petrol problem and simultaneously to relieve shipping was suggested the other day by an engineer, namely a return to the electric road traction of the early days of motoring.

The Edwardian electric brougham, as your Great-Uncle Joseph may have told you, truthfully for once, was a charming spectacle as it swept glossily through a sunnier and more flowery Mayfair, a footman perched on high by the side of the top-hatted chauffeur at his steering-wheel, and a veiled, lorgnetted duchess or two inside. It was dignified, silent, graceful and discreet, and, if a fever for speed suddenly attacked its elegant occupants, could do at least forty on the straight. Unlike the steam-car of the same period—the Lanchester, for example—it never spat boiling water in vicious mood or suddenly lay down to die, thereby affording Rudyard Kipling material for one or two rather noisy stories; and unlike the early petrol car, it never chuffed, rattled, or stank, like a Lucerne tripper. It combined breeding, spirituality, and opulence like an Elgar symphony, and is almost equally symbolic.

We've often thought what a boon an electrically driven car would have been to the Muse of Kipling (whose fan we doggedly are). That rather forced uproariousness over rather small jokes—compare *Brugglesmith*, the world's most tedious bit of fun, barring Wells's *Outline of History*—could never have been encouraged by a machine of such *ton*. Let's have electricity back for good, and watch the post-war road yahoo turn slowly civilised.

Feat

HAVING endured the Albert Hall acoustics with bitter mewings ever since the place was built, music-lovers, we find, can hardly believe even now that those air-pockets have been banished at last by sound-film engineers from Denham.

In our unfortunate view, although this feat will greatly benefit the galleries public during the current Prom. season, it completely ruins the *idea* of the Albert Hall, which is meant to annoy. The appalling roundness of its shape, that outer frieze, the terra-cotta ensemble, the fact that the Albert Memorial has never been stuck on top of it, as contemporary critics advised, the garish rococo of the interior, and the prevailing acoustics, making Chaliapin himself practically inaudible in the upper tiers—all these irritants were deliberately devised by whiskered Victorian sadists to hurt posterity. Poring over the blue prints, iron-faced hags in

huge black bonnets would sternly point out ways of hurting which the architects had missed, and beat them viciously with umbrellas. Lady Blessington might have issued an ultimatum from Kensington Gore, but she was bankrupt and gone, and d'Orsay as well, alas.

There were decent people in Knightsbridge and Rutland Gate, and even in parts of Kensington—Edwardes Square, for instance—who might have protested against the Albert Hall. They endured it with a pharasaical shrug, with the result that later generations have made the Indian Sign at their houses, their glory has perished, and their great-granddaughters look simply terrible.

Gulf

NONE of the highbrow weeklies, moralising on the late Kaiser, has as yet commented on a significant difference between Wilhelm II's Germany and Hitler's. The All-Highest, having composed and produced an opera, got a respectful but determined razz from the German musical world and nearly all the critics. Can you see that happening if Hitler turned composer?

It was while the Kaiser, after digesting this affront, was conquering new fields in his silver Lohengrin armour that there appeared in *The Path to Rome* a considered opinion of him and his people which has never been bettered in truth, point and brevity (1902):

They are of necessity histrionic. . . . They must be play-actors to be happy, and therefore to be efficient; and if I were Lord of Germany . . . I should put great golden feathers on my helmet, I should use rhetorical expressions, spout monologues in public, organise wide cavalry charges at reviews, and move through life generally to the crashing of an orchestra.

For only thus (added young Mr. Belloc kindly) could "a vulgar, short, and diseased man, who dabbled in stocks and shares and was led by financiers," become a hero. All this duly happened.

Hitler's method is even more skilful, appealing to the cloudy mysticism of the Prussian mind as well as to its love of noise and brute force. Apparently there are pictures or ikons of Hitler sold in Germany now with a nimbus surrounding the head, and an invocation below; which cultus, we dare surmise, is another thing poor Frau Schickelgrüber never dreamed of as she listened to baby Adolf's baptismal yells. And there are cretins going about talking complacently of the imminent "cracking" of a people like that, before we really sock them, would ya believe it?

Clanjamfry

THOSE Scottish Home Guards who have been recently ticked off for fussing round German airmen prisoners with cups of tea and what-not have not yet, apparently, received a resounding kick in the pants from their Nordic guests, who have a great contempt for softness of any kind. When this happens, the thing to do is to run and get the Boche a whisky and a cigar.

Before the clachan rings with the dismal yammering of poor old Mrs.

Cosy Comfort, who is due before long for a rap on the snuzzle in exchange for that plate of bannocks, let us beware of dragging Barrie into this business, as one enthusiast has already done. Barrie, as one or two of his biographers have pointed out, had a hard streak. This he managed to conceal from the Island Race by feeding it golden syrup in large quantities and keeping its attention fixed on the fairies. He was an exception, also. Our experience of Scotland is that those rugged hearts are soft all through except on Sundays, when they will see you die before they will give you a single drop of water, as nearly happened to us in the Calvinist wilds of Inverness-shire some years ago.

To reconcile six-day softheartedness with harsh knobbly exteriors and iron purpose is not difficult ; it is Nature's compensatory machinery like giving sahibs small, narrow, beautifully-shaped heads with absolutely nothing inside.

We pass this information on to the Race, who are so terrified of the Scots that every time a Reith or an Eliot speaks to them they dribble all down their pinafores. Yet at heart those formidable figures are just little mothers, a chap tells us.

Flannels

"OUR white flannels seemed like red rags to a bull," complained a citizen to one of the dailies the other day after certain malignants had rebuked him and his little playmates publicly for indulging in their devotions in wartime.

We thought his defence—namely that nobody hoots at people who unbend their minds between bombs and war-work with bridge, or even a book—rather surprising. He should surely have developed the lofty, well-known theme of the moral grandeur of cricket and its ethical values, on which masses of the Island Race, including ourselves, have been compulsorily fed during the Formative Years of our tender infancy. The symbolism of white flannels, again—we don't know if you are familiar with Prof. Osbert Sitwell's inspired words on this ritual vesture :

. . . demigods covered, as though they were soft-shelled crustaceans, with soft white armour, pipeclayed brasslets, gauntlets, greaves, vambraces, and codpieces, and crowned, perhaps as a mark of their arrested mental development, with those round caps that usually cling to the heads of schoolboys.

The Professor forbore or forgot to add that hitting a bit of leather with a bit of wood makes everybody pure and noble and disinterested and fine, like Kingsley's Elizabethans, but we feel the citizen above should have made a major issue of it. People will think he isn't serious, or something.

Discoverer

REMARKING in a recent sermon that it is needless now to deplore the mistakes and crimes which sometimes marked the origins of Empire, the Archbishop of Canterbury was thinking obviously of one or

two sloggers like Clive, who still wear their halo in our history-books, which are chiefly written by Whigs. His Grace might have offset this by citing the blameless annexation of Southend, now one of the brightest jewels, etc., etc.

The story of how our old colleague, mentor, idol and conquistador James ("Boss") Agate discovered Southend single-handed and put it on the map of Empire a few years ago has been told a thousand times, especially by himself. We mention it yet again only to remind the world that ruthlessness is not essential to Empire-building. When the *cacique* or head-man of Southend tremblingly emerged from his miserable mud village on the foreshore that historic day, bearing gifts of whelks, Southend Rock, and beer, to greet the Child of the Sun, he little dreamed that what Cortes did to civilise Mexico the Boss could do for Southend in one-fifth of the time and without any preliminary fights with the natives. But so it was ; all done by kindness. Southend to-day, with her majestic palaces and hospitals and universities, convents and churches and schools and whelkstalls, is the Boss's enduring monument even more than that imperial statue on the front which myopic visitors often take for a memorial to Queen Victoria.

In one thing Boss Agate failed. He could not move the sea any nearer to Southend—unlike that Master of Ceremonies at Brighton who astounded Hazlitt by ordering the tide in with a single peremptory nod. He failed ; but it is only human so to do, a chap once told us in the bar of Southend's principal palazzo.

Ace

THE former Yorkshire seat of George Osbaldeston, Esq.—"The Squire"—is up for sale. Let us lay a pensive laurel on the cenotaph of a great forgotten Regency figure who is undoubtedly—even more than that raving lunatic Jack Mytton—the archetype of Mr. Belloc's celebrated Nordic Man.

Five feet six high, with (says the acid Creevey) the features of a foxcub, wealthy Squire Osbaldeston devoted a long and brilliant life exclusively to hunting, racing, steeplechasing, cockfighting, betting, billiards, shooting, cricket, duelling, and other sports, at every one of which he showed himself, as the Pytchley remarked on a presentation cup, "the Best Sportsman of Any Age." He once brought down 98 pheasants out of 100 for a bet, and 100 brace another day. He was Master of the Quorn, the Pytchley, and the Burton, and one of the reigning gods of the M.C.C., from which he resigned in a fury after losing a match, scratching his name out of the members' book so vehemently that he scratched out two others and was barred henceforth. Big game never came his way, or he would undoubtedly have depopulated Africa of its fauna a century before its time.

Regency racing circles deemed the Squire "sharp," and Lord George Bentinck accused him of cheating over a £400-£100 racing bet. He was a Fine Old Sporting Type, to whom Dr. Johnson's lines might well apply :

Be sure th' Eternal Master found
His single talent well employ'd.

We are now taking you back to the studio, where Professor Grumble will describe the recently-discovered palæolithic jawbone of King's Burping, Beds.

Prejudice

A COY little Parliamentary answer by Mr. Ernest Brown having revealed that horseflesh is being mixed with beef in "various articles of popular consumption," one wonders why horseflesh shops on the Continental model are not being opened everywhere; except that this is a sensible step and contrary therefore to departmental procedure.

Objection to and pother about horseflesh—the horseflesh you know about, that is to say, not the horseflesh you don't (aha!)—seems exclusive to these islands, and is based chiefly on sentimentality, according to a psychologist we know. The populace shrinks from knowingly eating horse, he claims, because that long, kind, sad equine face reminds it of its nearest and dearest, Cousin Effie and Aunt Madge, and Mrs. Badgwick, who gave Mabel that fancy Dresden bowl, and that Duchess-who-opened-the-bazaar, and all those cricketers you see in the papers, and the M.C.C., and Drake, and Hawkins, and Glorious Devon, and Mother O' Mine, and all the rest of it. For this reason the *boucherie chevaline*, with its gilt triple horse-head sign, could never, he says, be a familiar object in our streets, any more than you could ever get the citizenry to look at "black bread," that delicious rye product which is, or was, one of the staples of Germany.

To get rid of this mass-inhibition would be a long business, because equine types are apparently increasing, and there the Mater rests at present, as the All England three-quarter said after felling his mother to the floor.

Protocol

WORLD-SENSATION No. 2 in this odd war, so far as we cricket fans are concerned, was the incident of that pro. who turned up at Lord's recently in uniform as a visiting officer of H.M. Forces.

Respecting the protocol and anxious not to metagrabolise the M.C.C., the modest pro. quietly sought to join his brethren in their lowly pen, corral, or quarantine, but was hoicked out and asked to luncheon by the President. The delicate and conflicting social problems involved, were we to discuss them here, would sound familiar to students of 17-century Spanish Court etiquette or the heraldic preoccupation of the old Prussian Junkerdom. Whether or not this incident will encourage Players to be saucy, or disrespectful, or careless, whether they will mock the Constitution at some future date by lounging round or actually using the Gentlemen's door in sheer bravado, we shall see. There must be puzzled faces among the M.C.C. to-day, so far as those wooden pans are capable of any expression whatsoever.

Cricket diverts us so profoundly in its social and ethical aspects that we earnestly pray the Gentlemen-Players protocol may survive any

changes following this war. It is the apotheosis of that art of distance-keeping which dignifies every stratum of the Island Race, it is traditional, it is precious, and if it were swept away we should probably find Players winking at Gentlemen's female relations, or something equally awful, like the newly-released serfs of Old Russia.

Pal

"WHY don't more people keep geese?" a chap asked Auntie *Times* the other day, raising a question with many social, emotional, æsthetic, and moral facets.

Doggie-worshippers will reply at once that the goose, refusing to fawn and flatter and adore, is far from *sympathique* and has even been known to hiss the Island Race. On the other hand the goose often mixes in very exclusive society. A beautiful dirty-faced goose-girl holding off Prince Charming as he makes his first passes would hardly be likely to look twice at a middle-class chap ambling past with Rover at his heels, her geese would undoubtedly make contemptuous head-in-air noises, and however cleverly Rover showed off, no invitation to the wedding-breakfast would be forthcoming. It is clear therefore that geese are worth cultivating socially for their own sake.

This may be an uphill task, for geese, although they live very soberly on a grass diet and go about in military formation, like retired majors in a Garden Suburb, have an offensive habit of cackling derisively as you pass. However, the unlikeliest dumb chums often make delightful pets, as Gérard de Nerval proved when he walked round Paris with a lobster at the end of a blue ribbon. "It does not bark," he explained, "and it knows all the secrets of the deep." Our feeling is that a single diamond-collared goose seen in Claridges could make the entire Race anserophile or goose-conscious in one night. Moreover, they taste nicer than Rover.

Hess

HAVING taken the first wild news of Hess's escapade bang on the chin and passed quietly out, the film and fiction rackets are even now, a couple of weeks afterwards, in need of prolonged rest and a light diet, our welfare workers report.

The film-critic body are still shaken, but out of danger. Those boys and girls know all too well—don't we all?—the weary mockery with which they would have dismissed any sensation-sequence comparable to this in a current Hollywood film; the dainty satire and wisecracks which would have been lavished on it by those cynical Sunday paper girls, whom we dearly love; the sparkling form of our old mentor and idol James ("Boss") Agate, who, we dare respectfully surmise, would have tried and executed those Hollywood dopes with brilliant verve and the incidental aid of Lamb, Hazlitt, Racine, Laforgue, Shakespeare, Sarcey, Rimbaud, Croce, Walkley, Montague, Old Aunt Sarah Bernhardt and all.

Nor could one blame the boys and girls for a moment, and least of all

the Boss. Many a seasoned script-hack has been fired for thinking up a "twist" far less crazy than the soberest morning-after conjectures or even the ultimate truth about Hess's flight. What's your angle, Izzy? Well, Joe, my angle is, mind I'm only thinking out loud, see, my angle is it's like this, some real big Nazi shot maybe he thinks things aren't going so hot, see, he's maybe a bit haywire or sumpthing, see, so maybe he grabs himself a plane and beats it out of Germany right here to England and he's all washed up, see, of course, I'm only thinking—Okay, Izzy, you're out.

Tabu

CLASHING her wiry old ringlets in a kind of palsied glee at her own Caudacity, Auntie *Times* has printed a little poem containing the line, "*I really loathe the bloody Hun,*" and all Fleet Street stands aghast.

The delicacy of the Press boys, our comrades and soul-mates, is too well known to need any tribute of ours. That list of Puritan newspaper euphemisms for plain English which the ruthless Mencken prints at the end of his master-work, *The American Language*, is equally sacred to Fleet Street. One or two of the cover ones may have been dropped of late, such as "a certain condition," but the tabus are still extensive, and cover practically every key-word used by Mayfair debutantes in cocktail-bars to-day. Even that fine old five-letter Scriptural word Dr. Johnson applied to Lord Chesterfield's literary morals is still totally banned; you either have to use Austin Dobson's pink-eared substitute "courtezan" or you can't quote the roaring Doctor at all. "Bloody" ("———," or "the Shavian adjective") is one of the hardest worked words in current speech and in constant use by duchesses and dustmen alike, but to find Auntie *Times* boldly spelling it in full is a shock.

A Harley Street psychopath once told us the austere elderly maiden ladies may sometimes quite suddenly perform very surprising and disconcerting tricks indeed. Don't say we didn't warn you if Auntie is seen dancing down Fleet Street ere long in her red flannel undies, bawling little French songs.

Push

SOME of Whitehall's publicity boys, each running or "grooming" a different star, are trying desperately, we hear, to think up new "angles" for their less exciting material.

Being photographed in the act of kissing blitzed babies or shaking hands with munition girls or smilingly accepting a synthetic-cheese sandwich from little Aggie Wheeble (eight), and partaking of it with evident enjoyment, has undoubtedly increased the fan-mail of more than one aspirant to high places, but it has been done too often and apathy has seized the populace. Given a fine summer something might be done with making one or two of the boys strip manfully to the waist, like the Duce, and photographing them in the act of brandishing a hayfork in sixteen positions, but unfortunately most of the Ministerial and sub-Ministerial

torsos concerned are even less attractive than the Duce's, and artificial hair is scarce. Fake photography and "dubbing" might overcome this, but the publicity experts are not sanguine.

Another idea they are toying with is to push little actresses in the water and make the Minister dive in and save them spectacularly, but this needs a lot of planning.

One tried and obvious way of piercing the great pulpy heart of the Race to its core is, of course, to employ the collaboration of our dumb chums; but in one or two such groupings (one of these experts was telling us) confusion might arise and the public might get the idea that Airedales were running certain Government departments. As not a few of the public have had the idea for some time past, we can't see that it matters.

Quiz

"**G**ENERALS die in bed"—the coarse old jape, not so long ago universal, is so obsolete now that the recent War Office ruling that senior officers (whose presence in the forward areas, says the Warbox, is "often essential") must provide their own protection can hardly have elevated one quizzing eyebrow.

Byegones being bygones, we won't recall the keen displeasure with which the glossy-booted Samurai were once viewed as they issued from their distant châteaux on rare occasions to inspect the forward pitch, or the bitter vim with which they were cursed for deciding the mud was good enough for play. Generals have changed, like tactics, and for this reason not all your cries will prevent our relating again, possibly for the last time, the nicest story of World War I, which, as you know, concerns the Australian private who fell into a trench during a rear-guard action in the Big German Push of 1918 and knocked a lurking brass-hat flat. The conversation went:

"Why the hell don't you look where you're going?"

"Who the hell are you anyway?"

"Damn you, I'm your Brigade Commander!"

"My God! (appalled stare) Have I run back as far as that?"

Check

TRYING hard to believe, ever since one of the gossip-boys asserted it on Shakespeare's birthday, that the Forces are fighting the book-sellers for copies of the Plays ("there is no author our fighting men read more eagerly"), we regretfully gulp and swallow at his statement further that the troops are going especially crazy over the Sonnets.

There is a considerable mass of sober maritime evidence, as perhaps you know, for the sea-serpent. There is likewise sober evidence in varying degree for a great many other marvels up and down the world which Science cannot explain away, such as the Liquefaction at Naples and the fact that some professional politicians die poor. But the Sonnets are a notable enigma and maze (to which only Lord Alfred Douglas to our knowledge has supplied a satisfactory key), and no mass of poetry has, up

to the time of writing, been more shunned by the Island Race except that small but fine corpus of English mystical verse, which likewise demands concentrated mental effort. It may be that the soldiery, like a lot of Hollywood stars, have suddenly gone all out to shame us and everybody by curling up en masse with the subtler classics, but what sort of a trick is that? Moreover, we ex-soldiers heard the same thing about ourselves in the last war, and so apparently did Slogger Kipling, who fell for the idea and wrote that story about a heavy battery which raved over the works of Jane Austen; a very false gallop of verses indeed, we thought.

There is also evidence for the Loch Ness monster.

Berry

STRAWBERRIES at two guineas a box, or 1s. 6d. each, on sale in the West End the other day brought back those inevitable memories of long-vanished blue skies and endless golden afternoons and early loves with which this fruit in its cheaper aspects is indissolubly linked; not to speak of a faint memory of a gigantic Russian Grand Duke whose favourite after-dinner game, they said, was to pelt furious little ladies with hothouse strawberries at five francs a crack, wearing an ice-bucket on his head and laughing uproariously at the innocent sport (Commissars doubtless do the same to-day).

Strawberries and cream on the Terrace of the House of Commons in the heyday of King Edward's reign were a different kind of orgy, and few gay dogs, so far as we can discover, ever enhanced the sedate jollity of the proceedings by throwing a plateful at some august adjacent topper—Lord Curzon's, say. Out-of-season peaches, however, were often thrown at Guardees down at Maidenhead by ladies of the Ballet, old boulevardiers assure us. The urge to throw fruit belongs to a more opulent day and was even then a token of foreign or gipsy blood. You never saw an Edwardian grande dame, for example, seize a pineapple and chuck it laughingly at an important guest; or so they tell us.

If strawberries ever come back into your life do not forget incidentally that special snobbery connected with them which never fails to humiliate the adversary—namely, the rejecting of cream and sugar with cries of epicurean distress and the dipping of them fussily into a glass of claret. Some chaps would score socially over eating their grandmothers, we do believe.

Flattery

COLONEL LINDBERGH'S latest declaration that Great Britain is defeated, that the war is practically over, and that American aid should cease demonstrates once more that the adulation lavished on that small-town hick in this country was not sufficient. We should have laid it on with cynical abandon and cunning relish, as the Germans did.

Never before in history did a dumb spotty young man win so much idolatry by doing so little; for which reason, if you ask us, the great Disraeli should have been alive to bulldoze him with that subtle, shameless

Oriental flattery of which he was a master, and the Colonel would not now be rooting so wholeheartedly for the Nazis.

As for the somewhat parallel case of Countess Edda Ciano, ruler of Italy, to whose frigid reception by Mayfair a few years ago a student of affairs was recently and with reason attributing the Axis Treaty—for La Ciano flounced straight on to Berlin in a huff and was welcomed like the Queen of Sheba—we think a few smart women and society hostesses should be spoken to severely, and perhaps beaten on the bustle with a hairbrush. (Platinum, if you insist, with a chaste floral design entwining the initials.) One smile displaying six teeth at most, and a luncheon invitation might—who knows?—have saved us at the last moment the deplorable necessity of having to wound and bash the beautiful Mother of arts and civilisation.

Doubt

ALTHOUGH Romano's in the Strand has only just officially passed away, its real end, as Auntie *Times* pointed out in a wistful obituary, came in 1910, when the famous bar closed. The death soon after World War I of the *Pink 'Un* extinguished the last rosy lamps of that raffish, cheery Bohemia which had used the restaurant as a club, and as the Gaiety girls had lost their curves there was nothing for Romano's to live for.

Sceptical by nature (though having a heart of gold) we wonder some times if that spontaneous nightly riot of fun at the *Pink 'Un* table at Romano's was always as exquisite as old men-about-town say. There was, and probably still is, a similar table at the Algonquin, New York, roped off for the acknowledged wits of the town, and the boys seemed to us to be working a bit anxiously in the spotlight, conscious of the public eye, firing off carefully-prepared impromptus, and mentally jotting down cracks for future trade use; which is only reasonable, after all, and God forbid we should ever raise an eyebrow. Our point is that only a populace fundamentally sadistic could enjoy such spectacles.

For this reason we praise the great Tennyson, who refused to go on working at being Victoria's lofty-browed Laureate when he was off duty, but swore horribly at bores—even clergymen—and grunted and told girls their stays creaked and glumly ate good dinners and generally enjoyed himself, and a fig for the fans. This kept Tennyson hale and hearty, whereas little actresses, who never stop acting, live a terribly strung-up life and make everybody else's existence a hell. You should gently rap them in restaurants with a tiny ivory hammer in passing, as we do.

Slur

STILL musing on these rustic things, we picked up a paper and found some prig or other sneering at our dear Surtees, in whose happier England we frequently take refuge from present discontents. Squire Surtees (said this prig) wrote like a stable-boy.

It may be that being brought up without the thrilling fragrance of

the harness-room in its nose makes this type say things like this. Maybe its thin petrol-tainted blood is revolted by all those lusty apple-cheeked thrusting sportsmen of Mr. Jorrocks's and the Flat Hat Hunt and the Goose-and-Dumpling Harriers—a primary kind of rustic Mohock, doubtless, but how their simple romps refresh and how their glowing health invigorates! We grant you that Surtees is unequal and that he never recaptures the verve and richness of *Handley Cross* and *Mr. Sponge*; also that he has an infuriating habit of occasionally making up imbecile Fourth Form names like "Blatheremskite Muff" and "Miserrimus Doleful" and "Lord Lionel Lazytongs, son of the Marquis of Fender and Fireirons." But our feeling is that the Squire wanted to get on with the hunting and just couldn't be bothered.

Coleridge or somebody once said there must be something morally wrong with a man who doesn't like apple-dumplings, and in our unfortunate view a chap who, whether horsey or otherwise, can't get any solace nowadays out of Surtees's England, so sweetly pastoral and so full of quiet (also noisy) fun, must be a vapouring sissy, and you can quote us as saying it. And incidentally, will anybody who denies that "*Handley Cross*" is Ashford (Kent) with a dash of Tunbridge Wells kindly step outside and repeat those words?

Drive

A RECENT theft of 100,000 tubes of toothpaste from a London warehouse seems one more indication of the growing tooth-consciousness of the populace, which once, as Arnold Bennett said after viewing the revellers at Blackpool, evidently preferred to patronise its oculists.

Old boulevardiers will tell you there was a period in Edwardian times when West End actresses worked like demons to get the Race interested in teeth. Millions of picture-postcards of the lovely Marie Studholme, for example, enabled the public to count every flashing molar, lavishly displayed in what was called The Odol Smile. Any musical-comedy star with double rows could have made her fortune ("Amazing Sensation Mystery Drama in West End Flat—Well-Known Star with Double Teeth Eats Sporting Peer.—Mother's Cry: 'I Always Knew Ruby Could Do It!'" etc.), and maybe did. However, no great popular interest in dentistry as a sport ensued, and Americans coming over and champing great glittering mouthfuls of ivory continued to marvel.

Then, quite recently, the papers began to be filled with advertisements showing gloomy dentists shaking their heads with relish and saying "White Lies" to beautiful distraught tartar-ridden girls who had hoped to dazzle gentlemen with their bicuspid and incisors, and the drive was on.

Snag

EVERYBODY except ourselves being scared to death of Lord Reith, we don't mind remarking casually, for what it's worth, that although according to his programme post-war Britain will be so beautiful that it

will make you quite ill, the Reith Rovers are still dodging a major problem with ignoble pusillanimity.

We refer, as a lewd scribbler in the Press, a Mr. Timothy Shy, has already tentatively referred, to the problem of the homely Island Pan. Palaces of marble and porphyry may rise on every hand; boulevards and colonnades and loggias and belvederes and terraces and pergolas and gazebos may make even our Midland industrial hells each an earthly paradise; you still have the well-known British dial mucking up (as Pater says) the whole ensemble.

We cherish few illusions about the Ancients, but it seems clear that when the Parthenon shone newly in its beauty, milk-white and dove-grey and violet against those skies, at least 75 per cent of contemporary Athenian faces didn't clash with it. Even to-day, when the beauty-percentage is mournfully smaller and the Athenians wear lounge suits and bowler-hats of a devilish Stock Exchange kind, the eye is rarely too grievously shocked. A certain norm of classical grace has persisted. Compare, contrariwise, the average Oxford Street crowd set against a background by Palladio or Piranese. Compare dons against the Bodleian. Compare anything, as the Red Queen would say, but don't cry.

Masks after the Old Masters are an obvious solution, but we'd like to suggest, once a week, Callot or Venetian Carnival masks as well, imparting gay diablerie. Would this suit our Island genius? Does it matter?

Tax

EXACTLY ninety-nine years ago next month the country was staggering under a fiendish blow. At every well-appointed British breakfast-table high-browed, severe, egg-faced, whiskey figures, pale with indignation and despair, clutched *The Times* with quivering fingers and moaned aloud, while Mamma behind the silver urn hushed the children and, outside in the hall, John and Thomas stood petrified, like statues, rolling glassy eyes in wild surmise. Peel had introduced a tax on income for three years at the rate of 2d. to 8d. in the £, the City was dumbfounded, and England was ruined.

There were no vivacious boys in Fleet Street in those days to paint jolly pictures of the Briton dancing along to the Inland Revenue, carolling like a bird and laughing his head off. It's only in the last quarter of a century, apparently, that we've grown to love our income-tax. The Victorians were sick with hatred and fear, the Stock Exchange reeled, and even the St. Pancras Guardians, those benefactors, paused in their brisk selling of pauper infants to the mines and wondered if the Millennium had really arrived as advertised; or so we conjecture from a few yellowed newspaper files we looked up the other day.

The moral is so obvious that it would take a far less brilliant pen than ours, as the youthful Mr. Beerbohm once remarked, to point it. Meanwhile all we ask in the citizenry's behalf is that the gossip-boys (who exaggerate) lay off that old merrie-merrie. Even when you pay income-tax simultaneously in three countries, as we once did, the sensation

amounts to nothing more than what the Schoolmen would call "morose delectation." (End message.)

Maestro

THAT gay little exchange in the House the other day between Sir Kingsley Wood and Sir William Davison on the subject of the public hangman's fees (laughter) made us wonder what has happened of late to M. Deibler, executioner of the Republic, who was putting in for a rise in a rather injured way about ten years ago, though whether the skinflint Republic gave it him we don't remember.

Deibler's official top-hat and dignified, sure technique gave French executions a *ton* which reminded all present that his office was of high antiquity, as his historic title "Monsieur de Paris" implied. The only Monsieur de Paris who ever let the profession down, so far as we know, was his fifteenth-century predecessor who dented the great two-handed Sword of Justice on the neck of the Constable de St.-Pol. Whether the mob hooted M. de Paris as the mob hoots a star matador who makes a clumsy or unforgivable kill is not recorded. M. Deibler's job was less difficult by far, and our own State expert in the High Works has few problems to solve, they say, barring one in elementary physics involving strains and stresses.

The Commons boys seemed to enjoy this little Grand Guignol interlude so much, a chap in close touch tells us, that when all those politicians, financiers, usurers and others responsible for our recent distresses come up for public execution, as after the last war, some M.P.s are likely to press for incidental music and a cold buffet.

Urge

NOW hoarse-voiced swans crash trumpeting over the pools, now open skies renew the year and yaffle under Gumber calls, now the first tiny snowdrops poke up their little heads, now birds seek their mates, now shall he love who never loved before, and now—among other harbingers of Spring—rural postmen are getting restive and chucking letter-bags over hedges, as one did again the other day, telling the policeman he couldn't be bothered.

This vernal restlessness which now and then lands passionate postmen in the can is not, a psychologist tells us, due entirely to Spring stirring in postal blood, but, in normal times, to a moral revolt against the lies and trash these honest public servants are forced to hump round in their bags all day long: company-prospectuses and patent-medicine ads, letters from business men to blondes and vice-versa, week-end "bread and butter" letters, moneylenders' and betting-touts' circulars, publishers' catalogues, lawyers' bills, wedding-present acknowledgments, letters from and to M.P.s, yes-men, actresses, fortune-hunters, foxhunters, place-hunters, tuft-hunters, and all the rest of it.

Even the harmless 5 per cent of the average contents of a postman's bag worries and puzzles him to some extent, added this psychologist.

A postman just can't think what on earth the Island Race can find to write to each other about, nor can anybody else. It is a great mystery.

Plea

AMID the customary Academy offerings, Lamorna Cove, Carbis Bay (moonlight), Fishing-Boats (Concarneau), ditto (St. Ives), egg-faced debs. and tomato-faced brass-hats, Highland cattle and apples on plates, there seems this year to be a macabre note, a striking picture called "Hitler in Hell," full of blood and fire and demons and just the thing for the dining-room mantelpiece, a connoisseur tells us.

It isn't for the likes of us to lift an eyebrow at the Hanging Committee, a highly respectable body of men who endure great agonies of mind and body every year for the sake of British Art ; but one does feel that since the R.A. allowed Sir Joshua's house in Leicester Square to be demolished a little time ago without a single protesting squeak, it is going a bit haywire, not to say (as a chap at the Arts Club said to us some time ago) bloody-minded.

The violent contrast between that Hitler painting and, say, the blank winsome pan of Lady X., or a flock of Sussex sheep at sunset, is calculated to give many of the *vieilles perruques* among the Academy public heart-disease (and maybe that's the idea ?). It would be far kinder to get artists to mix it, leading up to the diabolism, so to speak, by gentle degrees.

What we mean is that the usual pictures of Lamorna Cove should have devils roosting in the trees instead of birds. Witches should leer from behind the shoulder of Sir Gorgius Midas, K.C.B., the Dean of Barchester should have a background of strange demoniac grotesques, mopping and mowing, like that marvellous little Goya in the National Gallery, and round the sleek head of every wide-eyed deb should fly two-headed furry monsters. And even then some froward sourpusses wouldn't put down a shilling to see it, maybe.

Biff

"**T**HERE are too many actions for defamation of character," remarked Lord Justice Scott recently in the Court of Appeal, very soundly.

It's probably the Internal-Combustion Engine, source of so many of our ills, which has made the Island Race so touchy about its character. A couple of generations ago the papers (look 'em up) were full of violent jolly slanging-matches and nobody bothered to run squealing to his lawyer. Freespoken critics like Labouchere and Clement Scott and combative artists like Wilde and Whistler wouldn't stand a dog's chance nowadays (the chief reason Whistler sued Ruskin for calling him a coxcomb was to get a chance of socking his enemies en masse in the public court).

One can't help fearing that the Race, in many ways so tough and valiant, has become rather a big tearful sissy in this one respect, as Lord Justice Scott clearly implied. The result is that we inky boys are too scared of thumping damages to do anything nowadays but smear everybody who comes along with obsequious, glutinous appreciation, which is extremely bad for all concerned.

We used to obtain relief by reading Léon Daudet's daily exposé of the private gambols of Briand et Cie., and his habit of referring constantly to Barthou as 'Médor', the name for a noxious little dog, and to Briand as a 'souteneur' and a 'type équivoque' was highly refreshing. There are libel laws in France, but they don't (or didn't) throw French writers into a hairy terror. Maybe that 'droit de réplique', giving the victim the right to hit back at the same length, if he wants to, would soothe the Race's nerves, or maybe a good shaking from Nanny would do even more.

Farewell

CLUBLAND is normally in such a state of glazed apathy that the closing of the badly-blitzed Junior Constitutional threw most clubmen we personally inspected afterwards into a high state of coma.

This type of club can hardly stir the blood of the ardent and pure in any case, since it adds to the usual club aroma of last year's underdone roast-beef and last century's overdone leather settees the distinctive acrid odour of politics.

Political clubs seem to us quite wrong in principle, anyhow. You join a club to avoid conversation and to sleep in the afternoon, or alternatively to gamble all day and night.

Complete repose can or could be had in clubs differing as widely in nature as the late Cocoa-Tree, with its cosy, serene Augustan atmosphere—what became of that ancient blackened palm-trunk which shot up so nobly in its midst, we never discovered—the Athenæum, which Kipling compared to an Anglican cathedral between services, and even the 'Rag', where we recently dozed off sweetly before luncheon, awaiting our host.

Nobody seems incidentally to have thought of one obvious reason for the decline of Clubland even before the war; namely, that chaps may be finding out now what a refuge from club-life even a home is.

Beer

THAT weakened war beer we were recently warned to expect doesn't seem to be upsetting the malt-worms and tosspots much, or maybe it has arrived and they haven't noticed it. They mumbled about it considerably in the last war, but no poet—not even one of the manly post-war Beer-and-Cricket school—had the guts to put their complaints into fiery verse.

The Island Muse is very uppity about our native tippie, for some reason. Barring Mr. Belloc, nobody of importance has sung English beer since about the seventeenth century, unless we're mistaken, nor has its beauty inspired any native painter. Compare, contrariwise, Manet's famous *Bar aux Folies-Bergère*, in which the red triangle on that Bass bottle behind the well-upholstered barmaid is the focal point, so to speak, of the whole brilliant composition. Compare also Verlaine, who made a sonnet about London bars—

*"Où de longues misses plus blanches que l'hermine
Font couler l'ale et le bitter dans l'étain clair."*

That was written chiefly about a pub at King's Cross where Verlaine generally took his beer when he came to London in the 'nineties, and where the barmaids were apparently more lissom and less highly-tinted than we've been led to imagine. Verlaine also wrote a poem about the murky yellow waters of the Paddington Canal, which in those days were still distinguishable from draught London bitter, it seems.

Theory

Commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Sherlock Holmes, who plunged over the Reichenbach Falls in the arms of wicked Professor Moriarty on a March day in 1891, Auntie *Times* took the view that the Holmes who reappeared shortly afterwards and began a whole lot more detective work was an impostor, like the false Dauphin, Louis XVII. Auntie seemed to blame Dr. Watson for a share in this frigid and calculated deception.

Our own theory, developed in a paper read before the Philosophical Society some ten years ago, was that Dr. Watson—a weak character in any case—was drunk. Overcome with joy at sudden release from long years of slavery under the tyrant Holmes, Watson went straight from the Reichenbach—still wearing that damnable bowler hat—to the nearest hotel, where, after dancing a farruca in the vestibule, he ordered a dozen of best whisky and went to bed for a week.

Henceforth Watson was constantly drunk. Callers at 221B, Baker Street found him always in bed, wearing his bowler hat over one eye and chanting interminable phrases such as "Holmes in a pig's eye, Holmes up a gum-tree, Holmes five hundred and fifty sweet ha-ha-ha's, elementary-my-dear Watson, okay, big boy, detection my left foot," etc. He was thus in no state to judge whether anybody resembling Holmes was an impostor or not, and, in fact, he soon acquired the delusion that Holmes was under the bed, wearing a Dutch fireman's hat and knitting busily.

This theory—more charitable than Auntie *Times's*—startled the assembled savants to some extent. A venerable Professor of Philosophy fainted, we remember, and there was a terrific rush on the buffet, well-known philosophers fighting like dogs for 'doubles' of barley water.

Ordeal

INSISTING that he feels perfectly fit, Gordon Richards has been passed Grade 3 for military service after two rejections by the R.A.F., owing to the old chest trouble.

Champion jockeys lead such appalling lives that it has always seemed remarkable to us, surveying them objectively and through field-glasses, that they manage to totter round on their slim little legs at all. Fred Archer, for example, often lived during the season on hot castor-oil, black coffee, one slice of dry toast, and one glass of champagne per day, according to a racing authority we know, spending long hours in Turkish

and steam baths and, before a big race, sometimes fasting completely for forty-eight hours on end; showing that some Turf idols suffer even more than little actresses for their public's sake.

Suffering being admittedly good for literary style, the next remarkable thing is that star jockeys' memoirs and autobiographies should be of a dullness even more agonizing than those of Test cricketers or Liberal politicians. One big race is very like another big race, but after all jockeys get about and meet people in the intervals, and women often go crazy over them, which is more than can be said for Liberals or Test cricketers. Maybe purely physical suffering saps the imagination.

Décor

AT least half a dozen bombed West End theatres to date will have to be rebuilt after the war, an authority says. It may be that by then theatre architects will have realized that the only style for a true theatre is the lush Baroque, with lashings of plummy red plush and golden lights and opulent gilt Cupids, and bosomy gilt caryatids, and all the luxuriant scrolls, swags, festoons, and flourishes pertaining.

Since the last war, and even before, some of the boys have been far too austere clever with the chromium and concrete, with the result that in some theatres you can almost smell the ether, and you expect the body to be wheeled down the centre aisle under a sheet at any moment. Maybe this school of art is a tribute to the West End stalls public, but such bleakness is a great discomfort to the living and a handicap not only to the actors but to everybody on the stage.

In a Baroque atmosphere even the incestuous gambols of Eugene O'Neill's lantern-jawed boys and girls in their native swamps would be hardly a penance, for the Baroque encourages cosiness, good fellowship, and harmless mirth. It also evokes the old cheery music-hall impromptu of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and under its influence Daddy Ibsen's drabest and most portentous offerings might be suddenly enlivened by the overwrought Mrs. Hogstad tearing off her goloshes and saying to Pastor Kronk, "The hell with this, reverend—let's have a song and dance" (cue for band); and we'd like to see how your slice-of-raw-life Ibsenite fanatics would take *that* bit of stark simple realism.

The humanizing influences of the Baroque are a profound psychological fact. We bet that if you locked, say, Mr. Charles ('Sparkenbroke') Morgan in a room decorated like the late Lyceum he'd be dancing a coranto in half an hour and exchanging hats with the Absolute, as somebody once said.

Rap

"ANOTHER notable victory," remarked *The Times* playfully but accurately on the morrow of the Sitwells' libel case, "has been won in the long struggle of the persecuted race of poets to emancipate themselves from the oppression of the critics."

The booksy underworld, we find after exhaustive inquiry, is divided

on this point, since the big-time boys and girls nearly all make a bit on the side as critics themselves. Lesser booksy characters outside this racket generally claim that professional critics are engendered from condemned meat, or found under rotting logs, and that the only cure for them is Flit. ("This other Eden, demiparasite," as the little booksy girl said, spitting twice for luck, when she saw the critic in a new black hat.) This is perhaps an extreme view. There are three living British critics whose views on some topics we almost invariably respect, counting James ('Boss') Agate, our old idol. The others, the pimply pans you meet at booksy parties emitting shrill judgments on this and that, merely move us, as they moved Kipling, to marvel in our dear mind at the miraculously small amount of intellectual equipment and knowledge of the world which is deemed necessary to set up in this racket.

Taken by and large, whatever that means, our feeling is that Slogger Whistler was right when he said, or rather howled, that only the working artist has the right to be a critic, and we feel that chaps like Wilde and Croce and Middleton Murry, who produce long bits of solemn tralala alleging that criticism is a major science and critics practically gods are being just big whimsy teases.

That is to say, when a novelist like Miss Coodle is utterly shattered and knocked bow-legged in print by the beauty of the latest master-work of her friend and fellow-novelist, Miss Doodle, or vice-versa, that sweetheart is a true critic, or so they tell us, and we wish to Heaven we could stop laughing.

Charmers

THERE seem to be two schools of thought concerning the Comtesse de P—— (to echo the deliciously old-world manner of André Maurois), ruler of France, before the crash, through her boy-friend, Premier Reynaud. One school describes the Comtesse as beautiful and charming, the other says she was (and maybe is) but so-so. Or are we mixing up the Comtesse de P—— with the Marquise de C——, Premier Daladier's meddling charmer?

There is a faded Second Empire patchouli-and-frou-frou atmosphere about the whole rivalry of this quartet, which, apart from the fact that it hastened the doom of unhappy France, is exquisitely reminiscent of a minor roman à clef. Women drive politicians in harness much more openly in France, and that despite the well-known fact that to the impartial observer these forceful sweethearts are almost invariably, by all Hollywood æsthetic standards, no eyeful.

It may be the luscious, lavish pulchritude of the films which makes the Pompadour look to us now, from her portraits, like a sacrificial heifer, likewise blowsy Nell Gwyn. The 'beautiful Gunnings' are another of our milder disappointments. Eighteenth-century London mobbed them at the Opera and in the streets, they both married the cream of the Peerage, and they look out at us from the canvases of Mr. Cotes, R.A., like two worthy girls, agreeable but not terribly intoxicating, like Aunt Fanny's gooseberry-fool.

This goes (for us) for all that full-blown gallery of Restoration beauties

at Hampton Court and for practically every notable enchantress in history except darling Emma Hamilton. The Hollywood chocolate-box has spoiled our palate for less obviously tasty pans, maybe. Yet what a constant relief, after feasting on film charms for an hour or two, to turn up an album of Goya and contemplate some of those sinister black-eyed croncs of his, vibrant with life and power and fascination and ugly as sin.

Fixation

THE agonies suffered by chaps who climb the Alps for pleasure make this diversion undoubtedly Masochist Sport No. 1, in our painful view. You'd think that being no longer able to suffer intense misery in the Alps these boys would relax a little and amuse themselves as best they may at home, say by sleeping on beds of broken glass; but no. Some of them are now attacking Snowdonia instead, according to recent report. The kindly Welch will gladly gather them up, singing hymns very loudly and making their executors pay through the nose.

A friend of ours who has this strange mania could only explain, after long and dogged cross-examination, that he climbed the Alps because getting to the top of a snowy peak gives him a thrill. Students of Freud will recognize this fixation instantly as that of patients whose mothers have been chased up Primrose Hill by ice-cream men carrying ladders. Any Harley Street psychiatrist can tell an Alpinist what the trouble is (and if he doesn't know he'll tell him all the same), so we fail frankly to see any reason for it.

There is a reason for cricket and golf, a specialist once told us; namely, the pleasure of the mentally retarded in fondling, striking, or running after a perfect sphere of any size. This (said the specialist) explains all the ball-games to which the Race's waking hours are, in normal times, madly devoted.

We said "Explain that courage, fortitude, and unconquerable will to victory," and he said, "Rob a tigress of her bone, or a Wimbledon addict of his tennis-ball." He bore every mark of the successful charlatan, including the melodious baritone and the gardenia.

Dogs

MOBILE chiropody surgeries for the Army convey an official War Office recognition, unless we're foully misinformed, that the soldier still has feet. He may be using the old dogs infinitely less in this war than in any other, but they're there, useful as ever and, maybe, just as beautiful.

Seeing how dependent armies have been on the powers of the human foot since the dawn of the world, it seems odd that some sort of mobile chiropody service has never been established anywhere before. But Alexander's troops tramped into India, the Roman legions tramped from the Grampians to the Euphrates, the Grande Armée tramped up and down Europe constantly with nothing more, apparently, than rough and ready foot-inspections, to which was added, in the British Army

in World War I, punishment for trench-feet; a great grievance to the soldiery, who never liked standing knee-deep in freezing mud anyway.

Enigma No. 2 enveloping this question is that although the greatest possible mobility of infantry has been the major preoccupation in every age of the military mind, which has evolved special swift-marching corps like Velites and Light Infantry and Voltigeurs and Chasseurs to this end, even Napoleon never thought of fitting his infantry with some kind of roller-skates.

Dainty

ST. BRIDE'S, Fleet Street, known as the Journalists' Church because many journalists regularly attend a memorial service there whenever a big newspaper proprietor dies, has had such a wealth of emotion and regret expended on it, since its recent bombing, by the gossip-boys and others that it surprised us, not dreaming our comrades cared so much. But there you are. Behind those bare, cynical gnarled exteriors beat tender hearts, and maybe the incumbent of St. Bride's could tell many a moving story of hidden benevolence and piety if he knew any of the Fleet Street boys by sight.

All the same, we will not, personally, be stampeded into ecstasy over St. Bride's still-remaining steeple. It is a great deal more beautiful than that steeple in Bloomsbury with George III stuck on top of it in a Roman toga with a lightning-conductor sprouting from his noggin, and it would look perfect if it stood on an enormous cake all over Cupids and roses and silver-fal-lals—that's our position.

From the boosting the boys have lately given it we deduce that it reminds those romantics of their wedding morn, and agreeably at that. If it were actually covered with imitation sugar-icing, like that incredible steeple of the Sagrada Familia at Barcelona, they'd probably eat it in their present state of mind, we dare aver.

Wren's confectionery or pastrycook mood, of which the City has several examples, may have been the equivalent of pulling a long snook at the City fathers, who knows? The greedy cits killed his great noble plan for a new London. He may have retorted furiously in terms of something those gluttonous cuckolds really understood.

Tile

THAT engaging little fuss over an order—now rescinded—to certain A.-A. troops to salute A.T.S. girl officers has led that lewd scribbler, our fellow-hack 'Beachcomber', to come out strong for general military hat-raising, but not, at the moment, hand-kissing or the presenting of bouquets. As a matter of fact London already possesses a statue of an eminent soldier politely doffing his cocked hat, presumably to some blonde or other. We refer to that Victorian Duke who prances on his bronze charger at Holborn Circus.

The military hat, indeed, raises more than one problem of etiquette, notably in the police courts, where magistrates often swell like turkey-

cocks and demand its instant removal. In church it is normally removed, but strictly kept on by trumpeters and guards of honour—can you imagine the Swiss Guard without theirs at high feasts in St. Peter's? Well-bred field-m Marshals doff their cocked hats before embracing a good woman of their own social rank, but assume them when firing a cook of equal virtue.

Since the prime object of the military hat is to inspire terror—compare Hector's flying plumes and the gay feathers of Napoleon's Marshals—it should logically be worn at all times, surely? (To discard it for a top-hat, citing General Picton at Waterloo, is mere quibbling: Picton had a head-wound and could wear no other.) A *noble* terror is the point: if ignoble terror were desired, what better headgear than the fearful bowler-hat, which would have made Napoleon or Mars himself look a perfect cretin?

Snow

SNOW is like a dear little actress—after about three days its more obvious charms begin to pall. On the other hand we'd be the last to deny that if you aren't actually up to the neck in it, as we were, as all Europe was the other day, snow can be very inspiring.

The best snow-poetry we know is by (a) Edith Sitwell and (b) Théophile Gautier, whose *Symphonie en Blanc Majeur* contains the words *blanc*, *blanche*, or *blancheur* in every one of its eighteen or more lovely stanzas; a piece of virtuosity of which few of the bow-legged, lymphatic, strabismic, emasculated Muses of to-day are capable.

The most vivid snow-effects in music are those bleak shivering fifths which open Act III of *La Bohème*, and, still more, the idiot's dirge for Holy Russia in the falling snow of the forest-scene which opens Act III of *Boris Godounov*, after the trumpets have sounded and the Russian Perkin Warbeck has ridden on with the rebels to conquer his throne. What an opera!

Very seldom in this false life (speaking of *Boris Goudonov*) does one encounter absolute perfection. We came very near it one night in Paris in the late 1920's, when Chaliapin sang *Boris* in a sumptuous all-Russian production, with half the ex-Imperial-Guard-colonel-taxi-drivers of Paris roaring gloriously in the huge chorus and the other half in tears in the galleries.

Next to this for pure satisfaction we count a certain Phoenix Society production of *Love for Love*, with Athene Seyler as that delicious mopsy Mrs. Frail, and next to this, perhaps, Jacques Copeau playing Alceste at the Vieux-Colombiers. Three intoxicating theatrical experiences to set against years of yawns and coma and vexings.

But in our most searing agonies of boredom we could—and please God, will again—always glance across to the end of Row D and see James ('Boss') Agate upright in his stall, eyes closed, stiff and pale as death, suffering like a man. He will never know what we owe him for this silent comradeship.

List

MEDITATING deeply, ever since it was published, on the New Year Honours List, we admire more than ever the calm, equable justice with which, even in war-time, Whitehall recognizes the existence of the Arts and gives them a genial if slightly abstracted nod in passing. Four eminent children of the Muses, unless we've counted wrong, among that cloud of official bigwigs and business men, is not a bad proportion, considering how few of the Muses' children, including the new honour-bearers, will ever make £10,000 a year and upward (to our own knowledge less than half a dozen current booksy boys and girls will cut up warm, as they say in the City).

"Stick to Shakespeare, Mr. Lee—there's money in him," said Edward VII, that shrewd judge of men and affairs, to the Bard's biographer, very soundly. "Another damned great thick book!" said the jovial Duke of Gloucester to the author of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. "Always scribble, scribble, scribble—eh, Mr. Gibbon?" This was also a kindly pat on the back, H.R.H. having been told that Mr. Gibbon's damned great thick books were selling like billy-ho.

The Island Race may not be crazy about the Arts and their hairy practitioners, but when one of these queer, feckless half-wits manages to capitalize his stuff on a business basis the Race is the first to acknowledge it, and has even been known to stand the lad a public dinner.

But sour-puss dreamers who accuse the Race of a real hatred of Art do it a grave injustice, in our pitiful view. At least three happy big fat smooth rosy novelists, rolling in dough and laying down the law perpetually in all things in Heaven and earth, give them the lie at this moment.

Tennyson got a peerage for writing saleable poetry and Arnold Bennett, who owned a yacht, was nationally recognized to be tops.

So, as Spartacus said to the torturers, what?

Blow

A PROPOS bathing, the severe soap restrictions recently imposed by the Nazis on Denmark must be a blow of a nature inconceivable even to the Island Race, which deems itself more cleanly than most. The Scandinavians are even cleaner and also have more telephones, thus proving that they are more cultured and progressive than anybody on earth.

Nevertheless one old Nordic custom was always a great shock to Island modesty, and when a sahib, wallowing joyfully in one of those lavish Swedish bath-houses where they give you lashings of hot water and soap and big bunches of soft, fragrant pine-shavings instead of a sponge, suddenly perceived an enormous elderly *froeken* advancing to wash him, her sleeves tucked up and her stolid blonde pan expressive of the sternest devotion to duty, he generally submerged with bubbling cries of agony. This cosy old custom died out quite recently, traveller tell us.

Even more embarrassing and far more matey is the Japanese bath-house by all accounts. It's just a matter of viewpoint, the British deeming the act of bathing to be a semi-religious ritual closely connected

with cricket, the Japanese deeming it an occasion for harmless romps. For this reason, probably, not one of the 298 clergymen and spinsters who have written books in English on the Lure of Sunny Japan has ever described this quaint native custom, preferring to remark delicately that these charming little people are very cleanly (just like us) and passing on to the cherry-blossom and lanterns.

Another quaint Nipponese custom they also miss is that hellish industrial mass-production, a macabre caricature of the vilest imaginings of the West. However, so long as the Japanese keep clean and have plenty of telephones . . .

Shrine

NOBODY ever went near it except Americans flushed with Cheshire Cheese pudding, but it was one of the most delightful houses in the world, and now the Boche has gutted it.

We refer to Dr. Johnson's house in Gough Square, off Fleet Street, which was kept in almost exactly the same condition as the Doctor left it in, and crammed with memorials—books, prints, autographs, furniture—of that great Englishman. The garret in which Johnson and his Scots amanuenses toiled at the Dictionary was so full of his living presence that you almost felt that gigantic pock-marked figure rolling and snorting behind your left shoulder or puffing gruntulously up the steep stairs. (And maybe some of his actual presence did linger. The Doctor was no lover of clean linen, and you remember his careful correction of the peevish lady in the coach?—"Nay, Madam, *you* smell; *I* stink.")

There was no bath in the Gough Square house, so far as we remember, and indeed the Doctor would have thought it odd if there had been. The Age of Reason, unlike the Middle Ages, which were passionately fond of bathing, was a dirty one.

America will mourn the destruction of Johnson's house most largely—and especially, we judge, Colonel Isham of New York, who with Mr. R. B. Adam is the greatest living authority on Johnsoniana.

This shows the essential generosity of Americans, to whom the Doctor never referred without violent bellowings, calling them rebels and traitors and dogs; in spite of which they produced at the time an American edition of *Rasselas* which made the Great Cham think more kindly of them, for after all he was a literary boy and had all the bookish weaknesses.

Remembering all this, we wish to Heaven he had gone a few times to the Cheshire Cheese, where so many thousand American devotees have sat (and will sit) in his favourite seat, under the big brass plate.

Boost

"OUR own Lake District," remarked the *Daily Mail's* Special Correspondent on the Greek Northern Front, "grand as it is, seems tame and trivial beside this." But, as we happen to know, the influences of the Greek Lake District are not improving, whereas the influences

of the English Lake District notoriously are, and at any moment you might almost find Wordsworth peering round a tree at you and breathing hard, like a glandered horse.

For this reason many reasonable chaps leave the Lakes as quickly as possible. With their circumambient mountains they form the English Switzerland, with all the banal, depressing and even crushing associations those words connote, and which the note of a cuckoo-clock can bring back so vividly years afterwards that it makes you cry.

The Lake District of Macedonia, on the other hand, has no atmosphere whatsoever of carefully studied *simpliste* prattle, Unitario-Pantisocracy, the higher Nature worship, and all the rest of the Lake School stuff. (We see no reason for fawning on or buttering up the English Lakes because they happen at the moment to belong to the executors of Sir Hugh Walpole.)

A few hairy comitadji imported from the Macedonian Lakes by well-wishers to chase Wordsworth and Lucy round Windermere now and again, flourishing great knives and yelling for blood, might have made a difference. Not that a puling, whey-faced chit like Lucy would excite a comitadji to any extent, but those portentous hills would have rung with laughter, surely, at the sight of the poet, surnamed Hippokephalos, or Horse-Face, galloping round with Lucy clutching his other hand, his top-hat jammed down firmly, his eyes like burning coals, and his great jaws working busily.

Suffering thus would have improved Wordsworth's style, only his very greatest work would have survived, and he might not have been driven to take trips to Calais, with the distressing results which are now well known. Ah, Annette! Maybe she cursed the Lakes as well.

Phobia

THE last drop of fun having been squeezed by the less noble Press out of such attractive topics as monkeys, ice-cream, mandolines, barrel-organs, and long-distance running, it was a relief—though an expected one—to find the Prime Minister markedly abstaining from gibes at the Italian Army in his message to the Italian people. The fact being, as is gradually dawning on many, that the Italians, whose best troops are equal to any, have plainly little or no intention of fighting to the death for Germany, and are quite liable before long to turn on the Cæsar who has led them into this mess and kick his ample trousers very hard indeed.

But even if their troops were cowards, which they are not, as the men who are fighting them agree, if you've noticed, the Press boys might have thought twice before chorusing the kind of jeers common to all children and very simple savages, for whom the adversary is always comic, weak, half-witted, fearful, bandy-legged, low-browed, covered with hair, and an easy prey to stout, prancing warriors; a doubtful compliment to the victor, at that.

In some ways the fact that we are fighting Italy for the first time in history is a godsend to some of the Fleet Street boys, who have a huge inherited contempt for that Mediterranean civilization to which

we all owe so much. This antagonism has many roots, an obvious one being an instinctive fear of dark, lean, unshaven Southern faces and an instinctive love of round, smooth blond pans thatched with tow-coloured hair and furnished with pale, blank blue eyes; the one typifying vice, the other virtue.

If you don't believe us, drop into a Fleet Street milk bar and note the cries of rage and anguish when some sadistic leader-writer enters, disguised as Dante, and begins reciting from the *Divina Commedia*, as is the reckless custom of those cultured boys in their cups.

Cochonnerie

SOMEBODY or other in touch with French feeling put it neatly enough the other day when he said there are practically only two kinds of people in France at this moment—those who want les Anglais to win and those who want ces cochons d'Anglais to win.

We have known members of the Island Race to be curiously sensitive about being called pigs in moments of vivacity by the French. This is absurd, the French being fond of animals and apt when roused to compare one another freely to pigs and dogs and camels, insects and birds and frogs and fish, and especially the mackerel (*maquereau*, *maquerelle*); which once moved Anatole France, when so described by a lady friend during a domestic quarrel, to hold forth in his cynical way on the iridescent beauty of this fish and the oddity of choosing it to convey this especial insult.

Cochon is, however, not bitter, and is sometimes used to convey even a sardonic affection. One should constantly remember that the French, that great nation, have never loved anybody else really madly, and least of all the Goddams, the 'Engloys couez', wearers of tails.

Yet so much does the Island Race shrink from the harsh grip of Old Aunt Reality that when Henri Béraud wrote an article in *Guinguette* some months ago, during the Entente, beginning tranquilly, "I detest the English," many who read it were shocked, hurt and grieved.

Possibly one of the benefits conferred by this war will be the dropping of that strange Island convention that deep down in their inmost hearts everybody adores us. (Oh, the surprise and pain, those many years ago in our innocent infancy, when a cross-grained Dieppe fishwife indicated the contrary in the public market!) This will make rational contact with other nations much easier, in our ignoble view, starting with the Scots, whose monstrous sneering pity is so hard to bear.

Legs

THE real reason for the recent exhumation of the ashes of Napoleon's son, the poor little King of Rome, the Eaglet, from the Hapsburg vaults in the Capuchins' Church at Vienna, and the reburial ceremony in the Invalides has not yet been explained. It coincided with the centenary of the removal of Napoleon's body to the Invalides, and to imagine

Hitler as desirous of encouraging the Napoleonic Cultus in France at the moment surely seems fantastic?

However, the incident enabled at least two serious Organs of Opinion to devote long leading articles to the Napoleonic Tradition without once mentioning Austerlitz—a considerable surprise, like missing the Fifth Symphony in a critical piece about Beethoven.

They also dealt with the King of Rome without a single reference to Sarah Bernhardt's legs, which are as inseparable from the idea of *l'Aiglon* (Rostand) as they are from *Hamlet* (Shakespeare).

We weren't old enough to see the divine Bernhardt's legs in either play, for which you ought to be grateful. She must have been pretty terrible—most actresses are pretty terrible—in both, though wonderful in *Racine*.

When the divine Rachel recited a certain couplet from *Phèdre* ("*Ariane, ma sœur . . .*") Alfred de Musset used to faint away in his box. Bernhardt when she liked could produce the same emotional devastation, elderly playgoers tell us, and so does, or did, Miss — (name deleted by Censor), who once, while tearing the stuffing out of *The Trojan Women*, affected us so much that during a tirade we opened a vein with our penknife and quietly bled to death. As the rest of the stalls had obviously been dead for years this did not upset the tragedy queen, who raved on.

Pan

IN a simpler, sweeter age the New Year stationers' windows would be flooded with bright, sticky, violent chromo-lithographs of the Battle of Sidi Barrani, after—some way after—the well-known manner of Lady Butler or Caton Woodville.

Austerlitz may still be the Perfect Battle of All Time, planned with flawless genius and executed with impeccable mastery, rhythmic as a Court gala minuet and logical as a proposition in Euclid. Sidi Barrani, which runs it pretty close, experts say, is at any rate a fine example of the Classic British Battle; for Highlanders charging in the centre with the bayonet, as you are aware, were what the advertising boys call a key-feature.

We saw recently in a country junk shop a humble Victorian chromo showing Highlanders charging with the bayonet in some desert battle of the past—possibly Omdurman—which might almost have done for Sidi Barrani except for the tossing kilts and sporrans, the waving moustaches, and the grim, noble, excessively wooden and repetitive expression of the Highland dial.

Bayonet-work in our experience actually inspires grimaces, sometimes comic, which the Victorian war artist shrank from reproducing, for he invariably idealized and glorified the homely Military Pan. This convention has probably vanished with all the others.

It's our wistful view, as an ex-member of an ordinary Line regiment, that as soon as the enemy at Sidi Barrani realized the Highlanders were about to charge, they knew they were in for an Academy picture—maybe some 10 ft. by 8 ft.—sooner or later. This probably contributed

not a little to their speedy collapse, and you can quote us in St. John's Wood as saying it.

Revolt

"I'M damned if I will!" was the historic reply of Laureate Robert Bridges, that fine poet, when badgered by officialdom to write a little something to celebrate some State jamboree or other; and how right he was. We trust the present Laureate (who has served before the mast and therefore knows a few good deep-sea words) will reply similarly, if at all, to that petulant citizen who has been nagging him in the *Daily Telegraph*, and in verse, at that. "Boar's Hill seems strangely slack," concluded this carper, ringing the bell, as it were, at Mr. Masfield's Oxford residence and running like hell.

The fact seems to be that Alfred Lord Tennyson spoiled the market. That boy's Muse was always ready to tuck up her white samite sleeves and get on with any official topic suggested to her, from the opening of a new suburban railway to a R-y-l cold in the head. No other English Laureate has waded into the job so conscientiously, so far as we know.

There is, or was, a modest painting in the National Gallery by some artist unknown, to which we were much attached, called 'The Muse Inspiring a Court Poet', which reflects the proper attitude admirably. The swollen-cheeked Muse, purple in the face with rage, is roaring some order from the Lord Chamberlain right into the ear of the Poet, who is very aloof and dignified indeed. "Jump to it, you! A decent full-length A1 copper-bottomed sonnet on Gold Stick's third cousin's wife's ear-ache, and make it snappy!" the Muse seems to be screaming. "I heard you," says the Poet frigidly. Like Dr. Bridges, he is plainly determined to see her and the entire Household damned first.

Officialdom, with not a few of the citizenry, seems to think a poet can turn the stuff on and off from a tap. So he can, but not when bullied. Pigs and poets—you can't drive 'em.

Chant

ETON Music School performed a public service the other day by giving 'Rule Britannia' as Dr. Arne, an Old Etonian, wrote it—a far richer and more rollicking tune than the emasculated version sung nowadays. Like Handel's Largo, a love-song which the citizenry vaguely believes to have devotional associations, it comes in the middle of a masque or opera of exhausting dullness, except for the music. James Thomson's lyric, however, is quite good in its cheery jingo way, and only eighteenth-century convention impinging on modern ears makes that third verse sound so comic:

*Still more majestick shalt thou rise,
More dreadful from each foreign stroke, etc.*

A little time ago a clergyman wrote to Auntie *Times* explaining anxiously that this is not the dirty crack at the Race it seems to be,

'dreadful' in Thomson's sense meaning 'dread-inspiring'. Which is quite correct—if you had said to Dr. Johnson, "Sir, you look awful this morning," the Great Cham would have been rather gratified than otherwise and would not have hit you—but our own candid feeling is that it doesn't much matter. Let's face it: the Race is not particularly beautiful, despite its many admirable qualities.

Equally, when Slogger 'Night-Thoughts' Young referred in verse to 'Britain's awful Senate', we like to think he meant it both ways. M.P.s are pretty awful, barring one or two we have personally inspected and passed, and excluding of course the delicious Parliamentary Glamour Girls, whose every note is music.

Figure

NEWS of the death of the great John Ball, one of the Early Fathers of British Golf, a game invented by the Etruscans, according to a Fascist sports paper, afforded us a passing waft of glimpse of a fabulous, puzzling world, long since dead; the world of the early 1900's, when life was one long, dreamy sunshiny afternoon, survivors say, and golf was played by a few eccentrics in luxuriant moustaches in cycling knickerbockers and a tweed cap, but chiefly, south of the Tweed, by 'Mr. Arthur'. as Mr. Balfour was called by rich women.

It also set us pondering on the wayward tricks of Time, which has made John Ball the golfer loom far more gigantic in the Island eye than John Ball the priest, first militant English champion of the poor. The one could masterfully hit a tiny ball with a stick, the other started a social revolution. It is a pleasant game to disturb and baffle pop-eyed golfers in a club bar by deliberately confusing the two.

Similarly with Walter Hilton, the Augustinian monk, one of the great English mediæval mystics, who also has a more important golfing successor of the same name. The opening Hilton gambit is to say casually, "Well, personally I don't think writing a book like *The Ladder of Perfection* did Hilton's drive much good." The golfer gives you a startled look over his whisky glass and says, "What's that?" and you say, "Of course, St. Andrew's should have taken a much firmer line. That sort of mystical stuff might easily have lost him the Open. Look at Julian of Norwich!" Within five minutes you have your victim breathing hard and goggling like a glandered cod, within ten he is edging away, and within fifteen you see him talking in an undertone to the Secretary and glancing nervously sideways.

It may be objected that to take advantage thus of the innocence of golfers is a hellish trick, like bribing a little bird to tell them the Facts of Life. If that's your line we can only hang our head.

Decline

SOMEBODY having remarked that the tough, hairy Hemingway School of Fiction—"hair on the chest", a critical chap once said to us, "which comes off when you pull it"—is dying, we see no especial cause for

mourning, Mr. Hemingway's imitators having been somewhat tedious of late. The booksy racket is now waiting for somebody to open up a fresh market, we're told. Something big like the Kailyard Movement is required.

Very old lovers of the racket will tell you that immediately after young Mr. Barrie burst on the delighted 'Nineties with those sketches of the aboriginals of Kirriemuir, full of whimsy and mostly unintelligible dialogue, a number of chaps who could handle the lingo got in on the ground floor straight away and the London market was flooded with clachans and neuks and stickit ministers and quaint personages named Tamsy McQumpha and Leeby McTaggart exchanging craggy, delicious (if obscure) cracks full of 'heuchs' and 'glauchies', and handing out Kailyard philosophy by the barrowload. But these boys hadn't That Little Something young Mr. Barrie had, and they faded away.

Similarly with the Tarzan School, which derived from, and somewhat irked, Slogger Kipling, creator of Mowgli.

Mr. Hemingway's disciples have had a more profitable run, perhaps because it's not very difficult to write like Mr. Hemingway—even Mr. Hemingway can do it in his less thoughtful moments—and because a bit of toughness is always welcome. (The Cricket-and-Beer School did pretty well in the 1920's, being manly but not obscene, but those boys too have passed on.) Will anybody, therefore, who feels like starting something good please communicate with one of the leading publishers in the racket? If you call in person on 'Uncle', we may add, beware of Razor Charley, a member of his bodyguard who is feeling not so well these days.

Reprieve

EXCEPT that street carol-singers must not show lights or make noises like sirens, they may perform as German night-bombers permit, according to the public prints, some of which have already gone Dickensy on the topic in a half-hearted way.

It's difficult even for boys who can lash themselves into a frenzy of excitement over practically anything to simulate much enthusiasm for the annual dose of 'Good King Wenceslas'—and how typical of the Race (we always think) to roar this feeble Victorian tosh ad nauseam when it has at its disposal a treasury of some of the loveliest mediæval carols in Christendom! You hear these in churches but never in the streets, for which reason it would be no great loss if 95 per cent of seasonal public caterwauling were stopped, as Scrooge would agree.

It's our theory, incidentally, that Slogger Dickens, appalled despite himself by the false pink sentimental mush with which he was overlaying the Christmas Feast of his fathers, created Scrooge as the voice of his own shame-faced subconscious, but hadn't the courage to place that dæmonic figure on the lofty plane it deserves. What Scrooge revolts against is certainly not Christmas but Dickens's travesty of Christmas: the frantic belly-stuffing, the woozy, vague benevolence, the entire Dickensy Works, which that great master imposed on the Race with such consummate ease.

However, if Dickens had developed Scrooge on nobler lines he'd have had trouble with Chapman and Hall, maybe. We can see their shocked, infuriated whiskers quivering from here, as they flourish last year's royalty accounts.

Seer

AS modern soothsayers go, we vastly prefer Old Moore to his fair rival La Tabouis, the ancient whiskered buddy of the Stars being far more modest and entirely free from that tiresome pretence of having his dainty ear glued by big medicine and strong magic to the keyhole of every Chancellery in Europe.

Old Moore is just as good as the Girl Wonder at long-distance divination—the preface and main prophecy of his 1941 Almanack, just published and lying before us as we write, was written in May 1940—but it never leads him into dogmatic bumptiousness or orgulous flaffa. A broad, genial Chaldean glow, a kindly endeavour to help—that's the secret of Old Moore's charm, and if the Stars didn't know or forget to tell him in time for press that Gamelin would very soon be, even from the astrological standpoint, far from the wisest choice for the post of Allied Generalissimo, well, the Stars come a purler like anybody else at times, no doubt.

Next year, opening with 'the luminaries'—thus does the Ancient with old-world courtesy refer constantly to his buddies—in the Fifth House, in trine aspect to that sinister old slouch Saturn and Jupiter conjoined in the Ninth, has nothing much to do with the war, Stock Exchange fluctuations, earthquakes, a General Election (December), and the increasing welfare of India and the Far East preoccupying the Stars far more. July is pretty doom-laden for the Island Race: many notable Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-French marriages will be solemnized, there will be sharp divisions over foreign policy, a financial or racing scandal is likely to create a sensation, and 'a notable landowner in Lancashire will pass to the great beyond.'

The year closes with 'vastly better conditions in most parts of the world, and especially for the British Empire,' which is just our tea. Compare, as the dons say, the inconclusive weekly prattlings of La Tabouis, Belle of New York, and stick to the Old Firm, as we do.

. Scot

"ARE ye of the Johnstons of Glencro or of Ardnamurchan?" bawled the old Laird of Lochbuy as he met Dr. Samuel Johnson, who, says Boswell, "gave him a significant look but made no answer." We thought of Lochbuy and the Doctor when we read that the Court of Session at Edinburgh had just begun hearing an appeal in a four-year-old legal dispute over the right to the armorial bearings of the MacLeans of Ardgour: the sort of dispute which any right-minded Highlander would pursue doggedly with the Last Trump ringing in his ears.

The outsider has to be very careful on this sort of topic. A High-

land chieftain, a very kindly and courteous old gentleman indeed, head of a great clan, with the manners of the *vieille Cour*, once gave us such a glare of fury and hate when we ignorantly confused a branch of his clan with some low sept or other that we bit a piece out of our glass in terror, expecting every waiter within hail to leap from the shadows like the followers of James Fitz-James and dirk us.

A traveller once told us also that he was nearly assassinated in Inverary a few years ago for speaking lightly of a Campbell's name—actually that of a non-Aryan bookie of his acquaintance, though the glowering natives would have avenged that exotic clansman as readily as any other. It is also common knowledge, unless we are woundily misinformed, that it is still unsafe in some parts of the Highlands to be too curious about the murder of the Red Fox of Glenure, which enigmatic contretemps happened some two hundred years ago and is familiar in its main outlines to every reader of *Kidnapped*.

So, what with this and that, it is plain that Dr. Johnson, for all his size and bullying power, was taking his life in his hands when he gave Lochbuy the bird for putting an essentially important question, and the whaups might be crying over his dishonoured bones to this day.

For this reason we forbear with a light shudder to go into the delicate but interesting matter of a clan which after some research recently discovered its reigning chieftain to be a coloured gentleman living in the Colonies.

Job

WHILE the Army is steadily preparing for the offensive, the war correspondent boys, one of them told us last week, are likewise steadily overhauling their stocks of clichés, rejecting the obsolete—such as 'psychological moment' and 'titanic struggle'—polishing and rebushing the part-worn—such as 'split second'—and piling up quantities of fine big new ones which they are jealously keeping a secret till the big moment comes.

We are personally glad to see the honourable retirement of 'psychological moment'. The overbearing Fowler points out acidly in *Modern English Usage* that it is a blundering mistranslation from the German, via the French, and must be avoided as a HACKNEYED PHRASE; see also IRRELEVANT ALLUSION. God knows it has served its time in Fleet Street! For all we know it may even have been the principal reason Kitchener so cattily refused Edgar Wallace his medal when Wallace was the *Daily Mail's* War Correspondent in South Africa. The reason semi-officially given, we believe, was Wallace's scoop with the advance news of the signing of the peace treaty of Vereeniging, which he worked with three coloured handkerchiefs and a friendly sentry; a bit of hotcha journalism which the infuriated Kitchener, who detested all war correspondents impartially, never forgave. To-day the brass-hats are either more indulgent towards the Press boys or else they disguise their hate more skilfully, taking care at the same time to make scoops of any kind quite, quite impossible.

Nevertheless we should, if we were a war correspondent in 1943,

still pick our clichés with excessive care. A rattling good one might allure some connoisseur at G.H.Q. and might mean a knighthood in due course, which honour, as every Fleet Street aspirant knows, is gratifying not only to the boy concerned, but to his proprietor, adding prestige to the page and costing him nothing.

Meanwhile, added this chap, hopes of the Ideal Fleet Street Battle ('£5,000 Blonde in Super-Offensive Drama Sensation Mystery'—'Pyjama Girl Heads 10,000 British Troops in Amazing Infantry Charge'—'Mother's Cry: "I Always Knew Ruby Could Do It!"'—'Weeping Field-Marshal's Sing "Shipmates" as Thousands Cheer') are reviving. Everybody in the Street of Adventure knew the French strategists were wrong months before the 'Maginot mentality' was discovered to be a menace. You can't get a good front-page splash out of a blonde just sitting down in the front line. Action! is the cry.

Chum

"THE titmouse," remarked one of Auntie *Times's* Nature boys the other day, patronising as usual, "cannot read." We forget the rest of the article, which may or may not have been a dirty crack at compulsory education for titmice. What dismayed us was to find that the dumb chums selected by Auntie's boys to entertain and perhaps improve her little readers are getting smaller and smaller. (Last time we perused a Nature-piece of this kind it was about a Zoo gorilla.) One cannot tell where this sort of thing may stop, and Auntie must be very careful. The Island Race is particular about the size of the animals it doesn't mind being chummy with, and if they are below a certain size—e.g., the flea, a most companionable creature—the Race will not look at him at all and passes by with cold, distant blue eyes.

Observe incidentally that when Slogger Walt Whitman roared emotionally "I think I could turn and live with the animals," he meant *large* animals, such as the horse, the cow, and maybe the rhinoceros; though if somebody had taken him at his word and dumped him instantly among the cows in a nice mucky byre Slogger Whitman would probably have raised hell.

And what—since we have at last got into a cosy huddle over these questions behind Auntie's back—of the cows' point of view? Would you like to wake at dawn and find a noisy big whiskered American poet tied up in the next stall, yawping and bawling in free verse? That is the great failing, as we see it, of the Nature boys, including all those poets who go round pestering our dumb chums (e.g., the skylark) with idiotic questions—they never consider the other fellow's point of view.

What do you think was the skylark's come-back to Shelley? (Vulgar, we bet.) What do titmice think of *Times* readers, who may be able to read, and also write, but are far from beautiful? We naturally except the nude in 'September Morn', one of the very few known instances of a *Times* reader who looks nice without any clothes on.

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